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2.1.2. Conflict dynamics and tactics

On 21 March 2025, the SAF achieved a landmark victory by capturing the heavily defended Presidential Palace in downtown Khartoum. The rest of Khartoum city, including neighbourhoods in the east of the city, fell soon afterward.500 At the end of March 2025, the SAF captured the Souk Libya market in Omdurman,501 an RSF logistics hub,502 and RSF admitted retreating from Khartoum city.503 By mid-May 2025, the SAF reportedly had driven the RSF from its remaining positions in Khartoum state,504 including Salha,505 south of Omdurman, and Ombada, west of Omdurman.506 In January 2026, Prime Minister Kamil Idris announced the return of the government to Khartoum.507 Following a period of relative calm,508 RSF drone strikes hit the international airport in Khartoum509 and military installations across the Greater Khartoum area in early May 2026510 and early July 2026.511 In June 2026512 and August 2026,513 RSF drones were intercepted by SAF over Khartoum.514 In connection with the May 2026 attack, Khartoum authorities accused Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of orchestrating drone strikes on the airport.515

In April 2026, Human Rights Watch mentioned abuses against men and women detained by the SAF, including in Khartoum.516 In July 2026, authorities launched a security operation in response to growing public concern over neighbourhood insecurity, theft, and illicit drug activity in several areas.517

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