Please cite as: EUAA, '2.2.1. Actors involved and territorial control' in *Sudan: Security Situation*, October 2026.

2.2.1. Actors involved and territorial control

During the reference period, the RSF controlled the northwestern edges of North Darfur bordering Libya as well as El Fasher (since late October 2025)[545] and nearly all areas outside the city, including Zamzam, Melit, Maliha, Koma,[546] and Al-Zuruq.[547] Southwest of El Fasher, bordering South and Central Darfur states, the Sudan Liberation Movement–Abdel Wahid Al-Nur (SLM-AW) held territory around Jebel Mara mountain,[548] including the Tawila area.[549] The SAF controlled smaller territories around Al-Atrun airbase[550] and on the border to Chad,[551] including around Al-Tina border crossing.[552] As of late July 2026, Al-Tina reportedly remained the last major stronghold of the SAF and the Joint Force in Darfur, following the RSF's capture of most major towns and cities across the region.[553]

In North and West Darfur, the main SAF-aligned non-Arab armed groups were SLM-Minnawi[554] and JEM-Ibrahim,[555] which initially operated under the banner of the Darfur Joint Forces before most joined the SAF, as RSF advances in the region intensified. However, some factions sided with the RSF, while SAF-aligned Darfuri forces were redeployed elsewhere after the fall of El Fasher in October 2025. The Zaghawa Council was among the SAF coalition's most prominent tribal armed groups and helped preserve its early stronghold in North Darfur. Such groups mainly acted as community militias defending their home areas while supporting the SAF.[556] Although predominantly composed of Arab militias, the RSF expanded recruitment among non-Arab militias in Darfur formerly affiliated with the SAF.[557] These groups include SAF breakaway factions such as JEM-Sandal[558] and SLM-TC-Idris.[559] SLM-AW reportedly remained unaligned.[560]

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