

# The Deepening Crisis of War in Sudan: Collapse in Darfur and International Balances

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Analysis

The war between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which began on 15 April 2023, has for more than two years continued to generate a catastrophe that has shattered Sudan's political structure, displaced millions of people, and turned Darfur in particular into one of the gravest humanitarian tragedies of the century. The clashes that erupted in Khartoum rapidly spread to Darfur, Kordofan, and the White Nile regions, with the most devastating consequences unfolding in Darfur.

Darfur, which carries in its historical memory the resistance led by Sultan Ali Dinar against British forces in 1916, is today confronting destruction of a comparable magnitude. The fall of El-Fasher—the heart of North Darfur—to RSF control on 26 October 2025 after a two-year siege was described by the United Nations as “the collapse of a gigantic open-air prison.” Throughout the siege, access to fuel, food, and medicine was cut off; electricity and water infrastructure was destroyed; and civilians were subjected to intense bombardment. Following the capture of the city by the RSF, Reuters reported that El-Fasher had been transformed into an “almost completely deserted ghost city.”

In El-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, the war reached its bloodiest phase. Human Rights Watch reported that African ethnic groups—most notably the Masalit—were systematically targeted, that thousands of civilians were killed, and that tens of thousands were forced to flee to Chad. The killing of the Governor of West Darfur by RSF-affiliated militias and the public desecration of his body provoked widespread international outrage and reinforced accusations of “ethnic cleansing” directed at the RSF. The International Criminal Court subsequently stated that the acts committed in Darfur should be assessed within the scope of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Throughout the war, it is estimated that more than 120,000 soldiers and civilians have been killed, while over 15 million people have been forced to flee their homes.

### **External Actors Behind the Power Struggle Between RSF and SAF**

The war in Sudan has ceased to be merely a confrontation between two domestic actors and has evolved into a struggle for influence involving regional and global powers. The balance of international support has become one of the key determinants shaping the course of the conflict on the ground.

External support for the RSF constitutes one of the most striking elements highlighted in United Nations reports. There is substantial evidence suggesting that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has provided the RSF with weapons, ammunition, and logistical support, and it has been alleged that some armored vehicles and military equipment used by the RSF are of UAE origin. The Abu Dhabi administration, however, has denied these allegations. Findings indicating that certain military equipment manufactured in the United Kingdom has come under RSF control and been used in the field have also appeared in United Nations documents. There is no evidence that the United States has provided direct military support to the RSF; nevertheless, Washington's diplomatic maneuvers within the framework of its relations with Gulf countries have been the subject of analytical scrutiny. In addition, it is claimed that the RSF has recruited fighters and procured weapons through Chad, the Central African Republic, and regional militia networks.

By contrast, the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) have aligned themselves with more traditional allies. Egypt has emerged as the SAF's closest supporter, continuing to provide military training, intelligence, and advisory assistance. Saudi Arabia, perceiving the excessive empowerment of the RSF as a regional threat, has adopted a position closer to the Khartoum authorities through diplomatic and humanitarian channels. Eritrea is also known to have, at times, taken positions aligned with the SAF.

These external support dynamics have become one of the most decisive factors shaping both the direction and intensity of the conflict on the ground. The protraction of the civil war is leading not only to Sudan's political and economic collapse, but also to the destabilization of regional security balances.