

# Sudan Conflict Monitor

Issue **25** - March 2026



## Persian Gulf escalation and its implications for Sudan

### Executive summary

Recent U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran's response have introduced a new layer of uncertainty into Sudan's already internationalized conflict. While the war remains driven by competition between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), insecurity in the Red Sea and Gulf is increasingly shaping the strategic and economic context in which both actors operate. The most immediate effect is disruption to Red Sea shipping, [increasing](#) the cost and complexity of supplying Sudan through Port Sudan, with implications for fuel availability, humanitarian access, and broader war-economy logistics.

At the regional level, Gulf states are signaling greater coordination in response to the crisis, which may reduce competing support channels to Sudanese actors and redirect diplomatic attention toward Red Sea security, potentially limiting sustained engagement on Sudan. As regional actors prioritize Red Sea security and crisis management, Sudan is likely to receive less sustained diplomatic attention, while Sudanese factions may face pressure to adjust their alignments, messaging, and external partnerships to align with emerging Gulf security

priorities, particularly regarding Red Sea stability.

Developments along Sudan’s western frontier further illustrate the war’s regionalization. On February 23, 2026, Chad closed its eastern border following clashes between SAF- and RSF-aligned forces near Tiné that spilled into Chadian territory, highlighting the vulnerability of cross-border trade and supply corridors that sustain both civilian markets and armed actors operating across Darfur and the Sahel.

At the same time, military operations continue to produce severe consequences for civilians. Drone and air strikes by both SAF and RSF have consistently affected civilian areas, including markets, hospitals, humanitarian convoys, and critical infrastructure, contributing to continued displacement and civilian casualties.

Taken together, these dynamics indicate that Sudan’s conflict is being shaped not only by internal military competition but also by broader regional shocks affecting maritime trade, financial channels, and cross-border tensions. These pressures are likely to reinforce the fragmentation of territorial control, sustain parallel war-economy systems, and further constrain humanitarian access in the near term.

## How the Middle East conflict could reshape Sudan’s war

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East introduces additional uncertainty for Sudan’s conflict, which is embedded in wider Red Sea and Gulf security dynamics. Both the SAF and the RSF have benefited from external military, financial, and diplomatic support, including [documented](#) Iranian support to the SAF following the restoration of ties in October 2023. U.S.–Israeli strikes on Iran beginning on February 28 and subsequent Iranian retaliation have heightened regional tensions, with UN Secretary-General António Guterres [warning](#) of broader risks to regional and international security.

Sudan’s external environment is being reshaped by this wider security shock, with implications for the strategic calculations of external actors. The most immediate spillover is through maritime disruption. On March 1, Reuters [reported](#) that major carriers were [rerouting](#) away from the Suez–Bab el Mandeb corridor due to heightened security risks, with some traffic diverting around the Cape of Good Hope. For Sudan, this is significant because [Red Sea shipping](#) through Port Sudan is a critical entry point for fuel, food, medicines, and humanitarian supplies. Longer routes and higher insurance costs are already increasing [transit times](#) and costs, with direct implications for domestic prices, humanitarian access, and war-economy logistics.

## Gulf states’ convergence could reduce support for the belligerents

Reuters [reported](#) that, following Iranian strikes, the UAE president and Saudi crown prince held consultations, with Riyadh expressing solidarity with the Gulf states’ security concerns, while both leaders called for restraint and a return to diplomacy. While both leaders called for restraint and a return to diplomacy. The Gulf Cooperation Council Ministerial Council also issued a [collective condemnation](#) of the Iranian attacks at an extraordinary meeting, signaling a coordinated regional response. These emerging signals of Saudi–UAE alignment could change their relations with the SAF and RSF:

- The crisis is likely to reduce Gulf focus on Sudan: As Gulf states prioritize managing Iran-related security risks, they are likely to scale back sustained mediation efforts on Sudan while redirecting diplomatic engagement toward the Red Sea and regional security concerns. At the same time, Gulf actors may increase political pressure on Sudanese factions to align with their positions on regional security—particularly regarding Iran—potentially shaping external partnerships and political messaging.
- Sudanese actors are likely to use the crisis to signal allies: Sudan’s foreign ministry [condemned](#) the Iranian strikes but notably did not mention the UAE, despite its central role in Gulf security dynamics and regional tensions. This omission underscores continued strain in Sudan–UAE relations, even as Sudan seeks alignment with broader “Gulf stability” narratives.
- Increasing costs will further strain the Sudanese economy: Higher shipping costs will increase the pressure on Sudan’s access to both goods and hard currency. At the same time, heightened regional volatility may lead Gulf financial institutions to withdraw or reduce support to Sudan’s warring sides. This could further constrain WHOSE?? access to banking and trade finance.
- [Chatham House](#) notes that Sudan’s de facto authorities rely heavily on the UAE to clear international transactions and secure vital imports such as fuel and consumer goods. This leverage becomes more consequential as shipping costs rise. In addition, [US Treasury sanctions documentation](#) describes UAE-based entities that provide funds and military equipment to the RSF, as well as a UAE-based gold purchaser that moves Sudanese gold through RSF-linked bank accounts, thereby increasing compliance exposure as scrutiny intensifies.

## Both SAF and RSF are likely to shift positioning with regional powers in response

SAF is likely to emphasize alignment with broader “[Red Sea stability](#)” narratives—framing its position in terms of maritime security, protection of trade routes, and countering Iranian influence—to mitigate friction with Gulf partners. This positioning aligns closely with the [priorities](#) of both Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which share an interest in Red Sea security and Sudan’s state continuity, while the RSF continues to rely more heavily on networks linked to the UAE. These patterns suggest a continued, though fluid, divergence in external alignments between SAF and RSF.

The RSF has relied more heavily on commercial networks, regional financial hubs, and informal cross-border logistics, particularly through actors operating in [Dubai](#) and across the Sahel–Horn transit corridors. Heightened scrutiny of sanctions, banking, and gold trade routes may push RSF-linked networks to diversify or conceal financial pathways.

Beyond the Gulf and Red Sea arena, developments along Sudan’s western frontier also carry implications for both warring parties. Chad [closed](#) its eastern border with Sudan on February 23, 2026, following clashes between the RSF and the Joint Forces around the twin border towns of Tiné that spilled over into Chadian territory. The move reflects growing [pressure](#) on N’Djamena as Sudan’s conflict increasingly affects cross-border supply corridors linking eastern Chad and Darfur—routes that sustain both the war

economy and civilian trade. The border closure may disrupt humanitarian access, trade, and displacement patterns, as well as supply routes for both belligerents. For the RSF—whose Darfur operations rely on cross-border mobility and informal markets—tighter Chadian controls could constrain supplies, recruitment, and financing. For SAF, the closure underscores the strategic importance of western border corridors and suggests that tighter controls by Chad could restrict cross-border movement and complicate SAF operations in Darfur and Kordofan.

## Reducing diplomatic attention to Sudan

Escalation in the Gulf and wider Middle East is likely to reduce diplomatic attention on Sudan. While the AU, IGAD, and UN have taken steps to sustain mediation—bolstered by Sudan’s return to [IGAD](#) and the [appointment](#) of a new UN Personal Envoy to succeed the previous—regional governments and key external actors are increasingly absorbed by crisis management. This bandwidth squeeze risks slowing diplomatic coordination and reducing the political leverage behind mediation efforts, even as formal processes remain in place.

# Security developments



## SAF vs. RSF military operational patterns

- SAF seeks to control the central corridor while RSF consolidates in the West: SAF’s concentration on the central “ring road” axis (Khartoum–El Obeid) and its defense of garrisons in Kordofan reflects the strategic importance of maintaining control over Sudan’s core logistical corridor linking the capital to western regions and key supply routes. At the same time, RSF efforts to [seize](#) Bara in North Kordofan and contest

control over the Heglig oilfields point to a parallel strategy focused on disrupting SAF supply lines and securing access to revenue-generating assets critical to sustaining military operations. Furthermore, RSF continues to control most of Darfur and much of West Kordofan; it is pressing [eastward](#) into South Kordofan. RSF is allied with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North (SPLM-N, Al-Hilu faction) in the Nuba Mountains and [leverages](#) cross-regional networks, including Rizeigat-linked areas in Darfur, to sustain its operations.

- The territorial distribution of forces reflects an increasingly entrenched division of the conflict, with SAF consolidating central corridors and economic assets, while RSF maintains control across Darfur and western Sudan, reinforcing parallel zones of authority. RSF's coordination with SPLM-N (Al-Hilu faction) and its positioning in parts of South Kordofan point to a potential effort to connect its Darfur strongholds with the Nuba Mountains. For RSF, this could facilitate cross-front mobility, diversify supply routes, and stretch SAF's defensive posture across multiple axes. For SPLM-N (Al-Hilu), the alignment may provide access to additional resources, facilitate military coordination, and provide leverage against the SAF in contested areas. While this cooperation remains tactical, it raises the possibility of a more integrated Western–Southern conflict theatre.
- Tactics and weapons: SAF continues to rely on conventional [military capabilities](#), including air strikes, drone bombardments, and artillery, to target RSF positions, supply depots, and contested towns. Its counteroffensives typically combine aerial bombardment with coordinated ground maneuvers, reflecting a combined-arms approach aimed at retaking strategic locations, as seen in the [air-ground assault](#) that recaptured Bara. In contrast, RSF operations emphasize mobility and decentralized paramilitary tactics, relying on light infantry assaults, hit-and-run raids, and [drone](#) to pressure SAF positions and disrupt logistical networks. Shock assaults on towns, such as the raid on [Misteriha](#) on February 24, illustrate RSF's preference for rapid attacks attained to seizing or destabilizing local control. These contrasting approaches reflect two distinct military doctrines: SAF's state-style warfare based on heavy firepower and territorial recapture, and RSF's mobile paramilitary strategy focused on rapid assaults, disruption of supply lines, and operational flexibility to offset SAF's technological advantage.
- Checkpoints and logistics: SAF continues to control the main highways, operating checkpoints and collecting fees on commercial traffic. Recent SAF operations have also targeted RSF [fuel depots](#) in East Darfur, [reportedly](#) killing six civilians. RSF, meanwhile, controls local roadblocks across Darfur, where it similarly collects payments and regulates movement, while sustaining [supply lines](#) through cross-border routes linking Chad and Libya. Key RSF logistics hubs include El Daein and Nyala, with additional supply networks extending through CAR and Uganda, linked to [gold smuggling](#). These patterns indicate overlapping logistical systems, with both SAF and RSF relying on checkpoint-based revenue collection and movement control, while RSF also sustains operations through a cross-border supply network.

# Political developments



The SAF leadership in Khartoum has solidified its regional alignments. In late February, Sudan’s de facto Prime Minister Kamil Idris [visited](#) Cairo and secured “full support” from Egypt’s Sisi for Sudan’s state institutions and regular army. The SAF-aligned Foreign Minister Mohieddin Salem publicly [backed](#) Arab responses to recent Iranian attacks, emphasizing solidarity with Gulf states and condemning Iranian strikes. This aligns Khartoum with the Saudi–UAE–Egypt axis in the Gulf conflict.

The US Department of State [designated](#) the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization on March 9, 2026. The announcement [defined](#) the Muslim Brotherhood as a union of the Sudanese Islamic Movement and the Al Baraa Bin Malik Brigade. The designation was not publicly contested by the SAF-led government. The Islamic Movement has historically been a key political ally of SAF and played a central role in the political order under the former National Congress Party (NCP) government. However, local [reporting](#) indicated that the SAF-aligned Ministry of Foreign Affairs had expressed reservations about the designation shortly after the announcement.

In the immediate aftermath, Ahmed Haroun—who is subject to an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant—[reportedly](#) resigned as chairman of NCP, which, as noted above, was heavily associated with the Islamic Movement. However, this news could not be independently confirmed. Such narratives may signal an effort by SAF-aligned political actors to distance themselves from Islamist networks without directly confronting them. This may be intended to limit diplomatic fallout with regional partners opposed to Muslim Brotherhood–linked movements and counter RSF narratives portraying the SAF coalition as dominated by Islamist actors.

The RSF [welcomed](#) the U.S. designation, portraying the move as justice for victims of the Islamist regime. This positions RSF alongside Hamdok’s civilian “Somoud” coalition in [opposing](#) Islamist influence and aligns it with the political stance of its Gulf backers, particularly the UAE, which has long opposed Muslim Brotherhood–linked movements. By reinforcing this alignment, the RSF may strengthen its access to UAE-linked financial, commercial, and procurement networks that underpin its war economy.

Meanwhile, Abuzeid Taha, commander of the al-Bara Bin Malik Brigade, an armed wing of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood, delivered a [defiant Eid address](#), declaring: “By God, we will not lay down our weapons. Anyone who calls on us to do so is a traitor. We stand firm and will not abandon the Sudanese people.” The speech highlights the dilemma facing Burhan and the SAF as they come under mounting international pressure to reduce the army’s reliance on the Islamist Movement, even as the movement continues to wield significant ideological influence among senior SAF commanders.

Public reactions in Sudan also appear broadly supportive; a [rapid survey](#) conducted by Al-Tayar indicated overwhelming support among respondents for the designation.

# Humanitarian developments



## Attacks on civilians and displacement continue

Since February 2026, Sudan’s humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate. Large-scale displacement persists, with [thousands](#) of people newly arriving in River Nile State in March after fleeing violence in Darfur and Kordofan. At the same time, nearly one [million](#) Sudanese refugees remain displaced in eastern Chad, where border closures and ongoing fighting along the Sudan–Chad frontier have further strained humanitarian access, prompting Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to [close a hospital](#) as an additional 400 families were displaced in the border area in late February.

During February and early March, SAF drones reportedly struck a market in North Kordofan, killing [dozens of civilians](#), and shelling hit a humanitarian convoy in Al-Rahad, killing at least [three aid workers](#) and prompting condemnation from NGOs. An [estimated](#) 128 civilians have been killed and 145 injured by SAF drone strikes in the last 30 days.

RSF operations have also been associated with widespread civilian harm and destruction [of civilian infrastructure](#), including killings during the [assault](#) on Misteriha in February and reports of ethnic violence and summary executions during the capture of El Fasher in October 2025. Drone attacks by both parties continue to cause civilian casualties. For example, a strike on an IDP camp in West Kordofan reportedly killed 26 civilians, including [15 children](#).

The growing reliance on drones also continues to create risks for civilians and humanitarian actors. Strikes by both SAF and RSF have repeatedly affected markets, aid convoys, and other civilian spaces, increasing the vulnerability of humanitarian compounds and civilian infrastructure. Recent reporting indicates a [pattern](#) of reciprocal drone and air strikes by both SAF and RSF in or near civilian areas. SAF has repeatedly targeted busy markets in Darfur and West Kordofan, while RSF strikes have damaged health facilities, power infrastructure, and other civilian installations, causing significant civilian casualties. In West Kordofan, the presence of security forces in civilian areas elevates exposure during attacks. Although the state has experienced fewer strikes than the more active frontlines in North and South Kordofan, the risks remain comparable: four of the nine drone strikes recorded in West Kordofan in 2026 reportedly hit non-military targets. Incident reporting from February and March also indicates a rise in strikes by both parties during this period, resulting in substantial civilian deaths over these six weeks. The Sudan Human Rights Hub is conducting research for a forthcoming report on the targeting of civilians in the Greater Kordofan.

There have also been limited improvements in humanitarian access and conditions. The World Health Organization (WHO) [declared](#) the end of Sudan's recent cholera outbreak, as no new cases have been reported since mid-January. In late February, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) [resumed flights](#) with the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) to Khartoum, reopening a limited aerial lifeline for aid delivery after nearly three years of disruption. Despite these improvements, ongoing attacks on civilians, territorial fragmentation, and continued displacement suggest that humanitarian conditions are likely to continue to deteriorate in the near term.



# Human rights developments



The conflict between SAF and RSF continues to generate severe human rights and protection concerns across Sudan. [Estimates](#) suggest total conflict-related deaths may range between 150,000 and 400,000, while over 24.6 million people face acute food insecurity, and more than 12 million have been displaced, creating the world's largest displacement crisis. These conditions have significantly increased the risk of protection violations for civilians across conflict-affected regions.

## Detention and enforced disappearances continue

Reports indicate a growing proliferation of secret prisons and informal detention facilities, complicating efforts to trace the fate of missing individuals. The absence of judicial oversight and independent monitoring has reportedly enabled widespread abuses in these sites, leaving many families without information about detained relatives. Civil society sources estimate that [around 9,000 detainees](#) are currently held in Shalla Prison near El Fasher, where at least 300 have reportedly died due to medical neglect and poor detention conditions. The UN documented informal [detention sites](#) across South and Central Darfur, where detainees, including those transferred from Khartoum and El Gezira, are reportedly held under harsh conditions.

## Women's rights violations continue as International Women's Day is celebrated

Despite the global observance of International Women's Day in March, reports indicate that women and girls in Sudan continue to face severe human rights violations. Conflict-related sexual violence remains widespread and significantly underreported. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights documented over [500 victims](#) of rape, gang rape, and sexual torture in 2025, with many incidents reportedly used to terrorize communities, particularly in Darfur. Attacks on women and girls—including assaults carried out in front of family members—have been repeatedly documented, while UN agencies and NGOs report continued abductions of women for ransom and sexual abuse

in detention.

At the same time, women have also been affected by broader patterns of arbitrary detention and abuse. Security forces aligned with the SAF have reportedly carried out [mass arrests](#) in urban areas, often accusing detainees of collaboration with RSF. In one instance in April 2025, an NGO reported that 25 women were arrested in SAF controlled areas. Civil society sources also reported the [arrest](#) of women by RSF intelligence in Nyala, underscoring ongoing risks faced by women in conflict-affected areas.

Additional reports during March highlighted specific gender-based violations. The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network) [condemned](#) sentences of stoning issued against women, describing them as inhumane and linked to provisions in Sudan's 1991 Penal Code that have historically been used to criminalize women and girls.

These developments highlight how gender-based violence and discriminatory legal practices continue to intersect with the conflict, leaving women exposed to both conflict-related abuses and structural legal vulnerabilities even during periods meant to recognize women's rights globally.

## Forced evictions and destruction of civilian housing

Reports indicate ongoing destruction of civilian housing and forced evictions in several areas under SAF control. According to Radio Dabanga, authorities carried out [demolition orders](#) targeting numerous houses in Soba, Khartoum State, in early February, leaving many families without shelter. Similar practices have reportedly [affected](#) Kanabi communities in Gezira State, where local authorities describe the campaign as the “removal of informal or illegal housing developments.” [OSINT](#) videos circulated on March 2 appear to show the aftermath of these demolition operations. Such actions raise concerns about forced displacement and the loss of civilian housing during the conflict, particularly for already vulnerable communities.



# Economic & war economy dynamics



## Taishi defends the RSF “government of peace”

In his first [interview](#) with Al Arabiya television in late February, Mohamed Hassan Al Taishi sought to legitimize the creation of the “Tasis” parallel government, of which he serves as prime minister, presenting it as a civilian initiative aimed at advancing peace and governance in areas outside the control of the SAF. Furthermore, he criticized the existing military-led authority while outlining a vision for a federal post-war Sudan and described plans for his government to generate revenue from territories under its control, including the Heglig oil fields, which he estimated produce about 600,000 barrels per month, worth roughly \$42 million at market prices at the time of the interview. He also claimed that approximately 55% of the pipelines carrying South Sudan’s oil to the export terminals in Port Sudan run through areas under his alliance’s control. This suggests that the Tasis government may seek to pressure South Sudan to negotiate transit fees similar to those paid to the SAF-controlled government, although there is no confirmed evidence that such an arrangement is currently in place. According to Al Taishi, these resources would provide the financial base needed to fund essential services in areas administered by the RSF.

Securing a centralized budget for the “Tasis” government will likely depend on leveraging transit routes for South Sudanese crude rather than direct oil production. While this may provide a basis for seeking transit fees, no formal arrangement has been confirmed, underscoring the transactional nature of revenue-sharing dynamics in the conflict.

### *SAF controlled “government of hope” dogged by corruption allegations*

The first quarter of 2026 saw credible reports in local media and on social platforms detailing suspected grand corruption and exposing internal tensions and power struggles within the SAF-controlled de facto government. Key incidents included:

The gold smuggling allegations: On January 10, the online newspaper Massadir [published an airway bill](#) dated January 8, documenting a direct shipment from the Sudan Gold Refinery in Port Sudan to the UAE, and photos of the actual packages. The shipment—consisting of nine bags containing 225 kg of gold—was destined for a jewelry firm in Dubai. This

evidence suggested the involvement of senior officials in “off-the-books” gold exports. The Halfaia Bridge controversy: In February, a second scandal emerged regarding an \$11 million maintenance contract for structural repairs on the Halfaia Bridge. The contract was awarded by the High Committee for the Rehabilitation of Khartoum for Its Returning Displaced—chaired by Sovereignty Council member Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Jaber—to IBC Construction and Itqan Engineering Consultancy. The deal sparked public outcry because it bypassed public tender and involved companies with ties to the former regime. The resulting political fallout led to an official investigation, the dissolution of the Committee, and the transfer of its responsibilities to the Cabinet.

The resignation of a Sovereignty Council member: The resignation of Sovereignty Council member Salma Abdeljabbar al-Mubarak in February similarly followed a public controversy over her attempts to register land at a time when all real estate transactions were frozen. The immediate firing of the land registry official who refused to register the plot triggered a political backlash, prompting her to step down.

Inter-institutional friction: Following the bridge controversy, Lt. Gen. Jaber publicly accused an unnamed Senior Minister of financial misconduct, specifically alleging that the official leased residences and offices in Port Sudan using US dollars. This was particularly sensitive given the foreign currency shortages plaguing the government.

### *Political Response*

SAF Prime Minister Kamil Idriss issued a swift denial of Jaber’s claims and ordered that cabinet ministers can no longer serve in committees with executive roles without the cabinet’s express approval. In an attempt to manage the rising tensions and prevent further escalation, a reconciliation meeting was arranged between Jaber and Idris to project a sense of stability.

Idris issued a sweeping decree on March 12, dissolving the boards of directors of government-owned entities across Sudan’s state sector. The step came days after the U.S. designation of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. While no direct link has been formally established, the timing suggests the move may have been intended, at least in part, to signal responsiveness to external pressure. Credible estimates suggest the measure affects hundreds of state-owned enterprises as well as numerous “high committees” and “special councils.” Although these entities formally fall under government ministries, many functioned as completely autonomous parallel structures established under the former ruling National Congress Party, widely viewed as the political vehicle of the Sudan Islamist Movement, to divert state authority and revenues away from formal institutions.

Autonomous state-owned enterprises formed a central pillar of the kleptocratic system under Omar al-Bashir, operating outside formal fiscal oversight and generating off-budget revenues to sustain patronage networks among the military, security forces, and proxy actors. This system was reinforced through the co-optation of civil servants into resource distribution networks, forming a “deep state” that persisted beyond Bashir’s rule and obstructed reforms during the 2019–2021 transition. Following the October 2021 coup, elements of this network were reconstituted under SAF leadership, while the RSF has replicated similar patterns by leveraging control over resources and informal revenue streams. More broadly, these dynamics reflect a longstanding rentier political economy in Sudan, in which state and non-state actors extract wealth from peripheral regions to sustain power.

Against this backdrop, the timing of the sweeping decree issued by Idris—coming shortly after the U.S. designation of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization—is notable. While the decision may remove many loyalists of the former regime—potentially affecting more than 2,000 board members—it shows little evidence of a genuine reformist shift. Rather, it appears intended to signal the government of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan’s responsiveness to external pressure. In practice, the decree targets roughly 28 holding companies and more than 200 affiliated firms, illustrating the scale of the parallel economic governance networks built under the former regime. The most likely outcome is not structural reform but the replacement of one patronage network with another—rewarding the array of militia groups now aligned with the army in its ongoing war with the RSF.

## International & regional response



### Sanctions architecture and enforcement signals

The United States increased [sanctions](#) pressure on the RSF by designating three additional RSF commanders for their roles in the 18-month siege and eventual capture of El Fasher, following the United Kingdom and the European Union’s designations of the same individuals. US authorities stated that RSF forces conducted a campaign of ethnic killings, torture, starvation, and sexual violence during the operation. Parallel measures were taken at the multilateral level: the United Nations Security Council’s Sudan Sanctions Committee added four senior RSF leaders to its [sanctions list](#) after a proposal by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Taken together, these actions indicate increasing alignment among Western and multilateral sanctions authorities in targeting RSF leadership linked to battlefield atrocities. However, this is a consolidation rather than a major expansion of sanctions pressure, with a focus primarily on individual commanders linked to battlefield conduct.

It is not likely to diminish the resilience of Sudan’s belligerents to sanctions. For example, analysis of the war economy suggests that it has become self-sustaining. [Research](#) by the Rift Valley Institute on Sudan’s checkpoint economy suggests that without addressing route-based taxation, commodity flows, and cross-border trade networks, individual designations may have limited impact on the underlying fiscal structures sustaining the conflict.

### Accountability and legal pressure

A recent [report](#) by the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) [states](#) that RSF actions during the capture of El Fasher amount to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, based on testimony from victims and witnesses. A week later, the UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) released its report on the attack on El Fasher, stating that the operation bore the hallmarks of the report. These reports add to the growing body of documentation of atrocity crimes, which inform sanctions designations and other enforcement actions.

# Forward-looking assessment



## Outlook and near-term implications

Sudan’s conflict is increasingly consolidating into geographically divided zones of control, with SAF prioritizing central logistical corridors and RSF maintaining dominance across much of Darfur and western Sudan. At the same time, parallel logistical and financial systems—state-controlled transport networks and RSF-linked cross-border supply routes—continue to sustain the conflict’s war economy. Regional developments, including tensions in the Red Sea and Gulf, may further dilute diplomatic focus on Sudan while shaping the strategic calculations of external actors. In the near term, ongoing military operations, continued displacement, and limited humanitarian access suggest that humanitarian and protection conditions are likely to deteriorate further.