

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	647
Land:	Sudan
Kilde:	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)
Titel:	Fighting Rages Amid Ceasefire Talks
Udgivet:	26. maj 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	26. september 2023

Fighting Rages Amid Ceasefire Talks

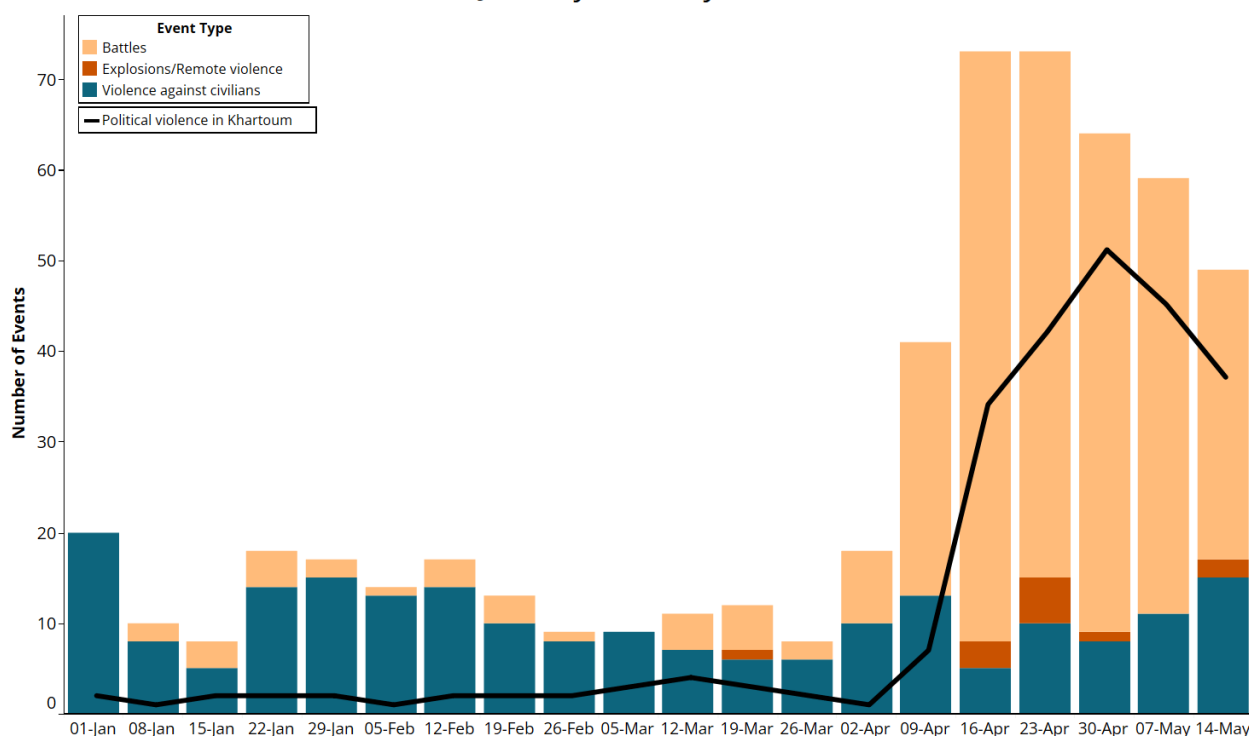
In the early hours of 15 April, fighting broke out between the SAF, commanded by Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, a [paramilitary force](#) established in 2013 in response to anti-government rebel movements in Darfur and led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, in the south of Khartoum. ¹[Declan Walsh, 'Rival Generals Duel for Power in Sudan, Dashing Hopes for Democracy,' New York Times, 15 April 2023](#); Both generals also played key roles in the Darfur conflict in the 2000s. Burhan was the army commander for the region, and Hemedti the commander of Arab militias. They worked together to violently suppress the uprising of the largely non-Arab Darfuri rebels. For more, see [James Copnall, 'Sudan crisis: Burhan and Hemedti – the two generals at the heart of the conflict,' BBC, 17 April 2023](#) Violence escalated quickly and spread out not only to Khartoum's sister cities, Omdurman and Bahri, but also to other parts of the country, including Darfur.

During the first days of fighting, the SAF proclaimed the RSF a rebel group. ²[Al Jazeera, 'Sudan army declares RSF a rebel group, orders dissolution,' 17 April 2023](#) This signaled a conclusive halt in power-sharing between the two sides that was agreed upon following the removal of Sudan's former leader, Omar al-Bashir, in April 2019, and an end to Sudan's transition toward civilian rule. The two commanders had spearheaded the overthrow of al-Bashir, and carried out a coup d'état in October 2021. ³[James Copnall, 'Sudan crisis: Burhan and Hemedti – the two generals at the heart of the conflict,' BBC, 17 April 2023](#) After more than a year of anti-coup demonstrations and international pressure, in December 2022, the civilian opposition bloc and the military regime [signed a framework agreement](#) to pave the way for a democratic transition to a civilian-led government. Following months of negotiations and as the country was getting closer to the signing of a final political agreement, disagreements between the SAF and RSF over plans to incorporate the RSF into the regular military caused a breakdown of the [political process to form a transitional civilian government](#). Tensions had escalated in the weeks leading up to the fighting, with reports of troop movements in the capital by both sides. ⁴[Declan Walsh, '2 Generals Took Over a Country. Will They Deliver Democracy or War?' New York Times, 6 April 2023](#); [Khalid Abdelaziz, Nafisa Eltahir, and Aidan Lewis, 'How Sudan's military factions set path to war as mediation stalled,' 28 April 2023](#) The delicate and fragile stability finally broke on 15 April as intense conflict erupted in Khartoum and elsewhere.

There are three areas of intense competition: Khartoum and its surroundings; North Kordofan state; and the larger Darfur region. Khartoum is under the most intense urban conflict as fighting has been mainly concentrated in Khartoum state, where 215 political violence events and at least 638 reported fatalities have been recorded since the fighting began – compared to just six events and no fatalities, in the five weeks prior (*see graph below*). Darfur has also been the site of intense fighting between the two sides, drawing in local militia groups. The SAF is holding onto its resources in the region, despite it being considered a stronghold for the RSF and its leader.

Political Violence in Sudan

1 January - 19 May 2023



Conflict Centers in Khartoum

Fighting began on 15 April with skirmishes around an RSF base near the Khartoum Sport City in the south of the capital. It quickly spread to the center of Khartoum city in the area of the SAF's General Command headquarters and the residences of both leaders of the SAF and RSF in al-Matar neighborhood.⁵[Khalid Abdelaziz, 'How Sudan's paramilitary forces took parts of Khartoum, stormed army chief's quarters,' Reuters, 10 May 2023](#)

The two sides have relied on their strengths to win the upper hand in the conflict. This is especially clear in Khartoum's tri-city area, where the SAF has mainly been fighting from the air, whereas the RSF has an effective ground campaign. There have also been reports of daily bombings. Almost all recorded remote violence events are airstrikes conducted by the SAF in Khartoum state. SAF airstrikes have targeted RSF troops in the area of military General Command headquarters, where they are stationed, as well as RSF bases in the Sport City, East Airport base, Presidential Palace in Khartoum, Kafouri and Sharg An Neel bases in Bahri, the Radio and Television Commission, and the areas where they are stationed in Omdurman. Air raids have also targeted civilian infrastructure, such as homes, schools, and hospitals. For instance, on 2 May, SAF air raids targeted the Sharg An Neel hospital area in Al Jarif East, Khartoum, reportedly killing several civilians.

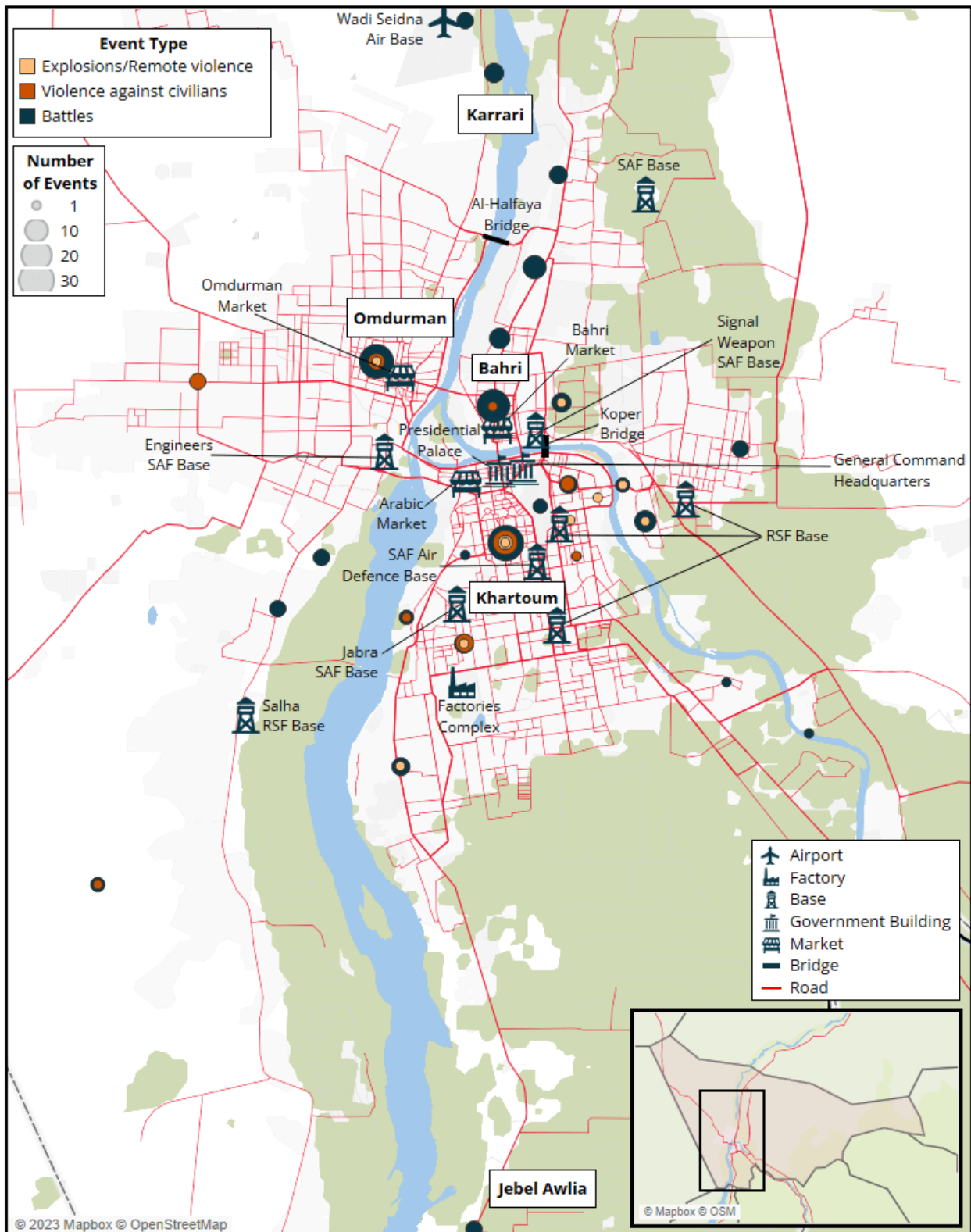
Since the start of the conflict, the RSF has reportedly taken over several strategic locations, including short control of the Merowe airport in Northern state, Nyala Airport in South Darfur, and several other important areas in Khartoum. Both sides have been vying for control of the strategic locations in the capital, including the Presidential Palace, airports, and military bases, as well as logistical routes into and out of Khartoum.⁶[Rift Valley Institute, 'HEMEDTI CHALLENGES SAF'S CONTROL OVER SUDAN,' May 2023](#)

Fighting between the two warring parties has mainly centered in the three main cities of Khartoum state along the Nile river – Khartoum, Bahri, and Omdurman (*see map below*). In Khartoum, the RSF has reportedly deployed troops in neighborhoods and in the main streets of the eastern part of the city, the airport and its adjacent neighborhoods, and the city center. The RSF also controls the northern area of Khartoum, which includes the Republican Palace, and its surrounding areas,

especially the Arabic market, which have been highly contested. The SAF, on the other hand, controls the eastern area of the General Command headquarters and Koper Bridge, and is also deployed in the southwest side of the city of Khartoum, in the al-Shajara area, which hosts a SAF base. The SAF also controls the area of the military weapons factories – a sensitive area where the army restricts movement and imposes an intense security presence.⁷[War Mapper, Control Map of Khartoum, 16 May 2023](#); [Ayin Network, ‘Battles between the army and Rapid Support Forces are approaching the most dangerous military area in the capital,’ 2 May 2023](#) At the end of April, the Central Reserve Police, also known as Abu Tira, was deployed in Khartoum “to secure public and private property and arrest robbers.”⁸[Sudan Tribune, ‘Sudanese police deploy Central Reserve unites in Khartoum,’ 29 April 2023](#) Abu Tira forces have been previously accused of serious human rights abuses against anti-coup demonstrators in Sudan.⁹[Voice of America, ‘US Sanctions Sudan’s Central Reserve Police Over Human Rights Violations,’ 21 March 2023](#)

Political Violence in Khartoum

15 April - 19 May 2023



In Bahri, north of the capital Khartoum, RSF troops are present in most neighborhoods, except for the SAF's military base located in the southern part of the city and another base located in the northern part of the city. The RSF has also deployed troops in most of the neighborhoods in Omdurman except for the SAF's military base located in the east of the city center. The SAF controls the areas northwest of the city, as well as northeast of the city, near the Wadi Seidna Military Airport in the Karari area, which is used as a platform for launching combat aircraft. The RSF has succeeded in extensively deploying troops in the cities of the capital, due to its superiority

in rapid movement, as its forces move in four-wheel pickup trucks with full military equipment. Meanwhile, the SAF has attempted to hinder their movement on the ground in the capital by using airstrikes and shelling.¹⁰[War Mapper, Control Map of Khartoum, 16 May 2023](#); [Africa Confidential, 'How the generals blew up the transition,' 27 April 2023](#)

Violence Escalates in Darfur

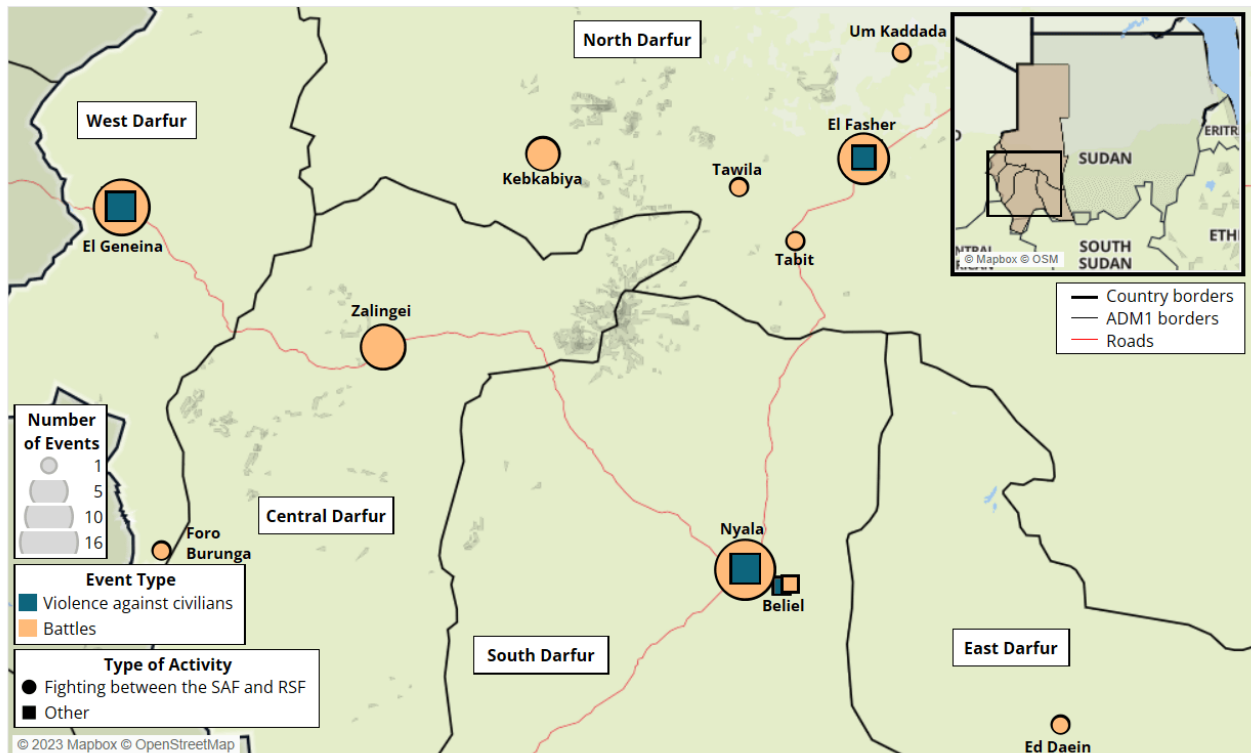
Since the start of the conflict, violence rose precipitously in Darfur. Both the SAF and RSF have been reportedly recruiting and training fighters in Darfur in recent months, mostly targeting youths from Arab communities of Rizeigat and Taaisha tribes.¹¹[Ayin Network, 'Darfur's recruitment race: Sudan's army and Rapid Support Forces compete for influence,' 26 March 2023](#) The SAF has also allegedly targeted supporters of Hemedti's tribal rival, Musa Hilal. The army, however, has denied recruitment based on tribal affiliations.¹²[Sudan Tribune, 'Sudanese army did not recruit Musa Hilal's fighters: spokesman,' 8 March 2023](#); [Mat Nashed, 'Could an old tribal foe undercut Sudan's Hemedti?,' Al Jazeera, 3 May 2023](#) A newly formed militia in Northern state, Sudan Shield Forces, has also been reportedly recruiting youths in different regions.¹³[Radio Dabanga, 'Sudanese denounce Shield Forces 'predatory recruitment' as concerns over new militias grow,' 7 April 2023](#)

Darfur is a highly militarized region, and has strategic importance for both sides, especially for the RSF, whose soldiers are mostly from ethnic groups in the region. It also shares borders with Libya, Chad, and the Central African Republic, where Hemedti's influence in the region has helped the RSF get supplies and fighters.¹⁴[Jason Burke, 'Why is the Darfur region so central to fighting in Sudan?,' The Guardian, 12 May 2023](#) The rise in violence has raised concerns about a potential civil war in the region as locals take up arms to defend themselves against attacks by rival tribes and the RSF.¹⁵[Mat Nashed, 'Shifting alliances in Sudan's Darfur as new civil war fears rise,' Al Jazeera, 27 April 2023](#) Activists have long expressed concerns about the rising number of armed groups and militias in Sudan and its impact on peace and security in the country.¹⁶[Radio Dabanga, 'Sudanese denounce Shield Forces 'predatory recruitment' as concerns over new militias grow,' 7 April 2023](#); [Ayin Network, 'Darfur's recruitment race: Sudan's army and Rapid Support Forces compete for influence,' 26 March 2023](#) Furthermore, conflict over land between ethnic Arab pastoralists and non-Arab farming communities has been frequent in the region. In the 2000s, the army outsourced counterinsurgency campaigns to Arab militias exploiting their fears of expanding rebel groups dominated by non-Arab groups.¹⁷[Mat Nashed, 'Shifting alliances in Sudan's Darfur as new civil war fears rise,' Al Jazeera, 27 April 2023](#)

Since 15 April, fighting in West Darfur has been centered in the capital, El Geneina (*see map below*). During the second week of fighting, violence in West Darfur more than tripled as deadly clashes also erupted between Masalit and RSF-linked Arab militias. The situation temporarily calmed down in the city following a truce signed by tribal leaders at the beginning of May,¹⁸[Radio Dabanga, 'Cautious calm in West Darfur capital after tribal truce,' 4 May 2023](#) only to escalate again on 12 May. Multi-day clashes erupted between the SAF and RSF, and Arab and Masalit militias, leaving hundreds of reported fatalities. There have also been reports of civilians arming themselves,¹⁹[Celine Alkhalidi et al., 'Clashes renew in West Darfur as food and water shortages worsen in Sudan violence,' 28 April 2023](#) and widespread destruction and burning of property and looting, including the looting of the El Geneina Teaching Hospital. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), over 240,000 people have been displaced in West Darfur since the start of the conflict.²⁰[IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'DTM Sudan – Situation Report 4,' 21 May 2023](#)

Political Violence in Darfur

15 April - 19 May 2023



In North Darfur, clashes have been primarily fought in El Fasher, with clashes also recorded in Kebkabiya and Tawila. The SAF has claimed to have taken control of RSF camps in El Fasher and seized nearly 100 military vehicles. On 20 April, local authorities and leaders brokered a ceasefire agreement between the SAF and RSF in El Fasher, which effectively divided the city between the two sides. The agreement allowed the SAF and RSF to keep their positions west and east of the city, respectively, with the central area operating as a buffer between the two parties under police control.²¹[Radio Dabanga, 'Darfur update: clashes in El Geneina, extended truce in El Fasher, and popular initiatives in Nyala,' 25 April 2023](#) A week later, five armed groups that are signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement – Minni Minnawi-led faction of Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), SLM/A-Transitional Council, Justice and Equality Movement, Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces, and Sudanese Alliance Movement – deployed hundreds of fighters to secure the city.²²[Sudan Tribune, 'Peace groups deploy combatants to protect civilians in North Darfur,' 27 April 2023](#) On 8 May, Minnawi withdrew his forces stationed in northern Omdurman to North Darfur, following the failure to mediate between the warring sides.²³[Sudan Tribune, 'Minnawi withdraws troops from Khartoum to North Darfur,' 8 May 2023](#) The decreased violence in El Fasher in May indicates the truce is holding for now.

In South Darfur, Nyala has been the site of intense fighting between the two sides. Residents in the city have reportedly obtained weapons to guard their neighborhoods. A local initiative launched by journalists and civil society activists seems to have failed to hold calm in the city, as fighting between the two sides continued in May.²⁴[Radio Dabanga, 'Darfur update: clashes in El Geneina, extended truce in El Fasher, and popular initiatives in Nyala,' 25 April 2023](#) The RSF reportedly controls the eastern part of the city, including the Nyala Airport, and the SAF the western half, which hosts the seat of government.²⁵[Radio Dabanga, 'Darfur update: clashes in El Geneina, extended truce in El Fasher, and popular initiatives in Nyala,' 25 April 2023](#); [Katharine Houreld and Hafiz Haroun, 'Sudan's warring generals closely matched ahead of latest cease-fire,' Washington Post, 3 May 2023](#) Fighting has also been reported in East and Central Darfur, albeit at lower levels. Fighting was reported in Ed Daein, East Darfur, at the start of the conflict. In Central Darfur, fighting has been centered in the capital, Zalingei. According to the Ministry of Health, from 15 to 25 April, at least 59 people were killed and 80 injured in the three localities of Zalingei,

Wadi Saleh, and Umm Dukhun in Central Darfur.²⁶[Sudan News Agency, 'Ministry of Health in Central Darfur confirms the stability of the health situation in the state,' 26 April 2023](#) However, violence has since dropped in both states.

Outside Darfur, in North Kordofan, fighting has continued in El Obeid, where the RSF is challenging the SAF's control over the town.²⁷[Katharine Houreld and Hafiz Haroun, 'Sudan's warring generals closely matched ahead of latest cease-fire,' Washington Post, 3 May 2023](#) ACLED records over 65 reported fatalities in El Obeid since the conflict started. The RSF has attempted to capture El Obeid for its strategic geographical location, as it is a transition point that links all roads to Darfur and Khartoum, has an airport, and is also a commercial center for the western states of Sudan.²⁸[Jason Burke, 'Communal violence and civilian deaths in Sudan fuel fears of widening conflict,' The Guardian, 12 May 2023](#)

Civilians Bear the Brunt of Violence

Since the start of the conflict, civilians have found themselves trapped between the two parties in the line of fire. Although estimates of civilian casualties differ across different sources, the latest estimates by the Sudan Doctors' Syndicate suggest that at least 800 civilians have been killed and thousands injured.²⁹[Eastern Herald, 'Sudan Doctors Syndicate Announces Latest Civilian Death Toll,' 17 May 2023](#) The IOM reports that more than a million people have been internally displaced as a result of the fighting, while at least 300,000 have crossed into neighboring countries.³⁰[IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'DTM Sudan – Situation Report 4,' 21 May 2023](#) Civilians have also been directly targeted during the conflict. ACLED records over 58 civilian targeting events in Sudan since 15 April, with more than 75% occurring in Khartoum state. Moreover, ACLED records at least three events of attacks targeting journalists and at least one incident of sexual violence in Khartoum state, and seven incidents of violence against diplomatic convoys and personnel.

Thousands of civilians are trapped in Khartoum amid a food, water, and electricity shortage.³¹[Ravina Shamdasani, 'Sudan: Plight of civilians amid hostilities,' 28 April 2023](#) Several instances of prisoner escapes and releases have also been recorded in Khartoum, Khartoum North, Omdurman, Nyala, El Geneina, and El Fasher. On 23 April 2023, the RSF accused the leaders of the SAF of releasing prisoners of Kober prison in Khartoum North, including the leaders of the Bashir regime. The Ministry of Interior, however, refuted this claim, stating that RSF forces broke into several prisons, including Kober prison, where former President al-Bashir and other top officials were held, and released them.³²[Radio Dabanga, 'Attacks on prisons in Sudanese capital free thousands of inmates,' 25 April 2023](#) Al-Bashir and about 30 other prisoners were reportedly moved to a military hospital in Khartoum under SAF's protection.³³[Al Jazeera, 'Ousted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir held at army hospital,' 26 April 2023](#)

Looting and pillaging incidents have also been common in Khartoum and throughout Darfur. RSF fighters are usurping homes, hospitals, markets, and international organizations' warehouses. The movement of the conflict into these zones creates a high degree of risk for civilians. The World Food Programme reported that nearly 17,000 metric tons of food products have been looted in Sudan since the start of the conflict, further exacerbating the humanitarian situation in the country.³⁴[Gabrielle Tétrault-Farber, 'World Food Programme says \\$13 million-14 million worth of food looted in Sudan,' Reuters, 4 May 2023](#) Meanwhile, the conflict also forced dozens of hospitals to halt their operations in Khartoum and other areas of the country. Civil organizations, unions, and resistance committees have launched fundraising campaigns and established health emergency rooms in the neighborhoods to restore some hospitals and health centers. These centers are working with limited resources, and volunteers from doctors to members of resistance committees are working in tandem to treat the injured and provide health care.³⁵[Lynsey Chutel, 'As Hospitals Close and Doctors Flee, Sudan's Health Care System Is Collapsing,' New York Times, 30 April 2023](#); [Mat Nashed, 'Sudan 'resistance' activists mobilise as crisis escalates,' 22 April 2023](#)

Conflict Expected to Persist and Exacerbate Local Tensions

Despite at least six announced ceasefires since the start of the conflict, fighting in Sudan has continued for the past five weeks.³⁶[Al Jazeera, 'Why do Sudan's ceasefires keep failing?,' 4 May 2023](#) The start of US-Saudi-mediated talks between the two parties in Jeddah on 6 May, gave many Sudanese hope for an end to the conflict, but the limited focus on humanitarian issues and a ceasefire has meant that reaching a permanent solution to solve the crisis was off the table from the beginning.³⁷[Reuters, 'Sudanese pin hopes on Jeddah talks between warring factions,' 8 May 2023](#) After nearly a week of talks, the warring factions signed the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan. The declaration, however, has been labeled as 'meaningless' by many Sudanese activists and civil society actors as it has had practically no effect on the fighting on the ground.³⁸[Oscar Rickett, 'Sudan crisis: Jeddah agreement branded 'meaningless' as fighting resumes,' Middle East Eye, 12 May 2023](#) In Darfur, 'goodwill committees,' formed to broker peace in the region,³⁹[Ayin Network, 'The Sudan Conflict Observer – May 10 update,' 10 May 2023](#) have been successful in negotiating fragile truces in some areas. On 20 May, a week-long ceasefire agreement was signed by the warring factions, which came into effect 48 hours later to allow humanitarian access.⁴⁰[Al Jazeera, 'Sudan's army, Rapid Support Forces sign 7-day ceasefire,' 21 May 2023](#) Clashes, however, seem to have resumed in Khartoum after a short lull.⁴¹[Khalid Abdelaziz and Nafisa Eltahir, 'Clashes in Sudan's capital shatter lull brought by ceasefire deal,' Reuters, 24 May 2023](#)

After a month of intensified fighting, this conflict has led to a high degree of destruction in the cities and towns of Sudan. The violence is likely to persist as long as both armies have the capability to continue fighting – both subject to the RSF's ability to recruit from domestic allies and rumored foreign fighters and the SAF's ability to sustain its dominance in military hardware.⁴²[Katharine Houreld and Hafiz Haroun, 'Sudan's warring generals closely matched ahead of latest cease-fire,' 3 May 2023](#) Meanwhile, local disorder could increase given the fragmented military and police, as alliances fall to different sides and local authorities are contested. It is likely that local disputes, prison breaks, and other latent instability will increase as the security and governance sector focuses elsewhere. Thus, while Sudan's violence will continue to be dominated by this national contest between the two armies, it will likely experience an increase in these local contests as well.