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El Fasher and Kordofan: the strategic fronts in Sudan's shifting war — Expert comment



The Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) capture of El Fasher — following 18 months of siege — marks a significant turning point in Sudan's civil war. El Fasher was the last stronghold of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its ally in the Darfur region, the Darfur Joint Forces. With the RSF consolidating control over the Darfur region and the SAF and its allies controlling central and eastern Sudan, including Khartoum, the eye of the storm has shifted to Kordofan.

At the same time, the fall of El Fasher is likely to have profound impacts on the local community. From the beginning of the conflict on 15 April 2023 until 24 October 2025, ACLED records nearly 400 incidents of violence targeting civilians in El Fasher and surrounding areas. Those incidents — over 55% of which were recorded in 2025 — led to over 1,400 reported deaths.

During its siege of El Fasher, the RSF built a complete encirclement of the city using sand berms, trapping civilians inside, and those trying to flee were targeted and killed. Based on previous incidents like the [RSF retaliatory attacks in al-Jazirah](#) against the ethnic group of senior RSF commander Abu Aqla Keikel, who defected and joined the SAF last year, there is a high probability of ethnic-based attacks in El Fasher. The RSF may particularly target members of non-Arab ethnic groups — particularly the Zaghawa — who it accuses of supporting the SAF and Darfur Joint Forces.

Dr. des. Jalale Getachew Birru, East Africa Senior Analyst at ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data) commented:

“The fall of El Fasher represents a major blow to the SAF and its ally the Darfur Joint Forces, but it is not the only strategic location that could shift the dynamics of Sudan's conflict. The Kordofan region also holds significant strategic importance and could play a decisive role in shaping the war's trajectory. In Kordofan, the SAF and its allies are fighting to secure key routes connecting

central Sudan to Darfur, aiming to expand their offensive operations in the west into the Darfur region. At the same time, the RSF is trying to establish control over both the Darfur and Kordofan regions to helm its alternative government in western Sudan.

“The outcomes of the battles in El Fasher and Kordofan will have an enduring influence on the future of Sudan’s war and its political landscape. They may determine whether the country eventually splits into two territories — east and west Sudan — each with its own government.”

Note to editors: For more information or to interview Dr. des. Jalale Getachew Birru, please contact the ACLED press office at press@acleddata.com.