

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	759
Land:	Sudan
Kilde:	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project (ACLED)
Titel:	The RSF sets its eyes on North Darfur
Udgivet:	17. maj 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	6. juni 2024

Situation Update | May 2024

Sudan: The RSF sets its eyes on North Darfur

17 May 2024

[< Back to Sudan Hub](#)

Sudan at a Glance: 6 April – 10 May 2024

VITAL TRENDS

- Since fighting first broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 15 April 2023, ACLED records over 6,050 events of political violence and more than 16,650 reported fatalities in Sudan.
- From 6 April to 10 May 2024, ACLED records over 415 political violence events and over 875 reported fatalities.
- Most political violence was recorded in North Darfur and Khartoum states during the reporting period, each with over 100 events, and with 239 and 101 reported fatalities, respectively.
- The most common event type was violence against civilians, with 160 events recorded, followed by battles, with 142 events. Compared to the previous four weeks, ACLED records a 30% increase in violence against civilians. Most of these incidents of violence against civilians are being perpetrated by the RSF in al-Jazirah and North Darfur states.

SUDAN



Horn of Africa | Situation Update
6 April - 10 May 2024

Key Figures

Political Violence Events

417

1% increase
compared to the
previous month

Reported Fatalities

877

3% increase
compared to the
previous month

Key Developments

6 April - 14 May 2024

Political Events

11 APR.
The Darfur Joint Forces announce their support to the SAF in El Fasher, North Darfur

13 APR.
The SLM/A-Transitional Council withdraws from its positions in El Fasher, North Darfur

22 APR.
Revolutionary Awakening Council commander Musa Hilal announces support for the SAF

24 APR.
Zaghawa native administration calls on mass mobilization against the RSF in North Darfur

4 MAY
The SAF and Abdelaziz al-Hilu's SPLM-North faction agree to coordinate the movement of aid in Kordofan

Violent Events

4 APR.
The RSF and allied militias launch attacks targeting Zaghawa communities in North Darfur

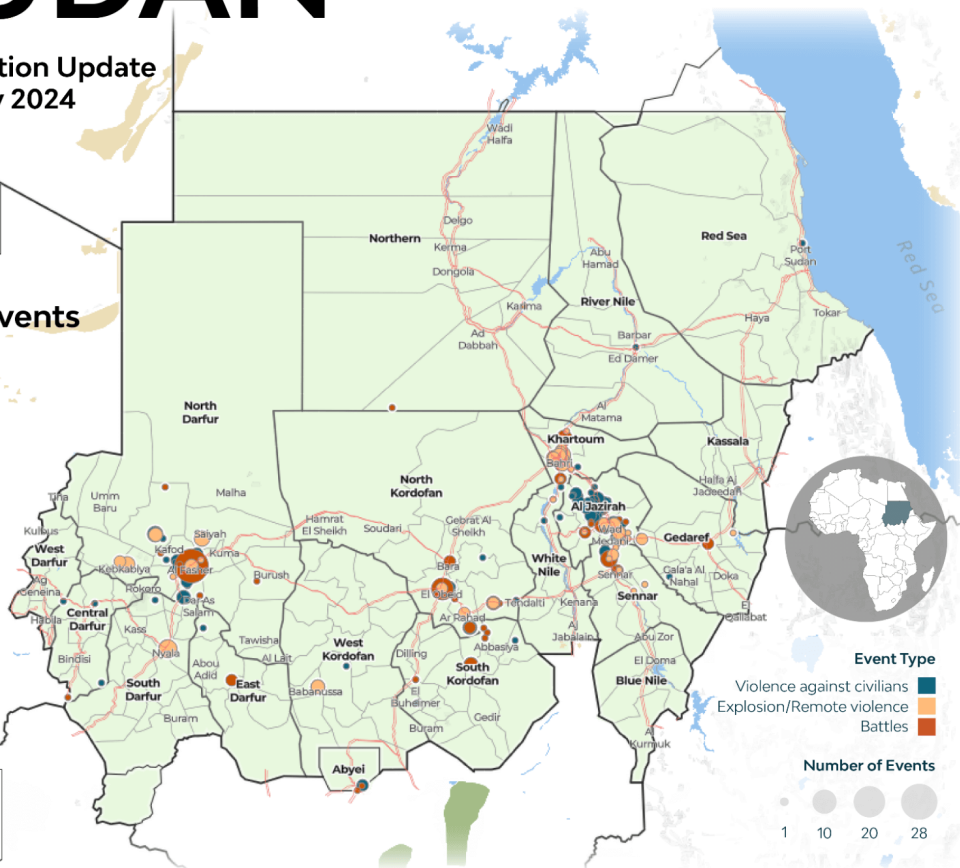
13 APR.
Intersecting fighting breaks out between factions of the SLM/A-Transitional Council in North Darfur

14 APR.
The RSF gains control of Mellit, North Darfur, after clashing with the SAF and Joint Darfur Forces

19 APR.
The SAF and allies clash with the RSF in al-Gallil Petroleum Refinery and control the RSF camp in al-Jari mountain in Khartoum

26 APR.
The SAF and allies clash with the RSF and control the General Intelligence building in al-Gallil, Khartoum

10 MAY
The SAF and Darfur Joint Forces clash with the RSF in El Fasher, North Darfur



The RSF sets its eyes on North Darfur

The RSF's capture of Mellit city in North Darfur — a strategic location connecting North Darfur to Libya — resulted in a new conflict dynamic in the region. While controlling the city and areas surrounding El Fasher, the state capital, the RSF and its allied Arab militias attacked non-Arab civilians. These attacks are reminiscent of the campaign launched by former President Omar al-Bashir against Darfuri armed groups in 2003, which targeted non-Arab communities wreaking destruction in the region for over a decade.¹

The RSF advances in North Darfur have upset relations between armed groups and communities in the region. Some members of the Darfur Joint Forces coalition pledged neutrality, while others declared their support to either the SAF or the RSF, leading to a split within the coalition. The planned offensive on El Fasher city raises fears for the condition of the civilian population in El Fasher, a city that has hosted thousands of internally displaced people from the rest of Darfur and where escalating violence may further hamper humanitarian operations.

Ethnic-based attacks in North Darfur

On 14 April, the RSF gained control of Mellit city after clashing with a coalition of SAF-allied groups. Seizing control of Mellit, situated 60 kilometers northeast of El Fasher, means the RSF can forge a pathway to Libya for supplies and reach the SAF-controlled Northern state, which hosts the army's 19th Infantry Division.² However, the RSF campaign on Mellit sparked intense violence near El Fasher, with incidents reported in 13 villages in the surrounding areas — including frequent civilian targeting. Between 4 April and 10 May, there were a reported 20 attacks on civilians, including extrajudicial killings, torture, large-scale property destruction, and looting. The violence targeted disproportionately non-Arab ethnic Zaghawa communities and exhibited analogous organizational tactics to those deployed during the counterinsurgency campaign in 2003,³ when the Janjaweed targeted non-Arab ethnic groups in Darfur such as the Masalit and Zaghawa.⁴ Since 15 April 2023, ACLED records at least 19 attacks against non-Arab communities by the RSF and Arab militias in North Darfur.

In April 2024, the RSF and its allied militias launched these targeted attacks as retaliation against Zaghawa SAF-allied Minni Minnawi and Gibril Ibrahim, who lead the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) faction and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), respectively. These two groups are actively fighting the RSF in El Fasher. After [four out of five states in Darfur](#) fell to the RSF in November 2023, some Darfur rebel groups and ethnic militias began to mobilize in support of the SAF to defend El Fasher, the only capital not controlled by the RSF. Among them were the [Minnawi, Abdul Wahid al-Nur, and Mustafa Tambor factions of the SLM/A, and the JEM](#).

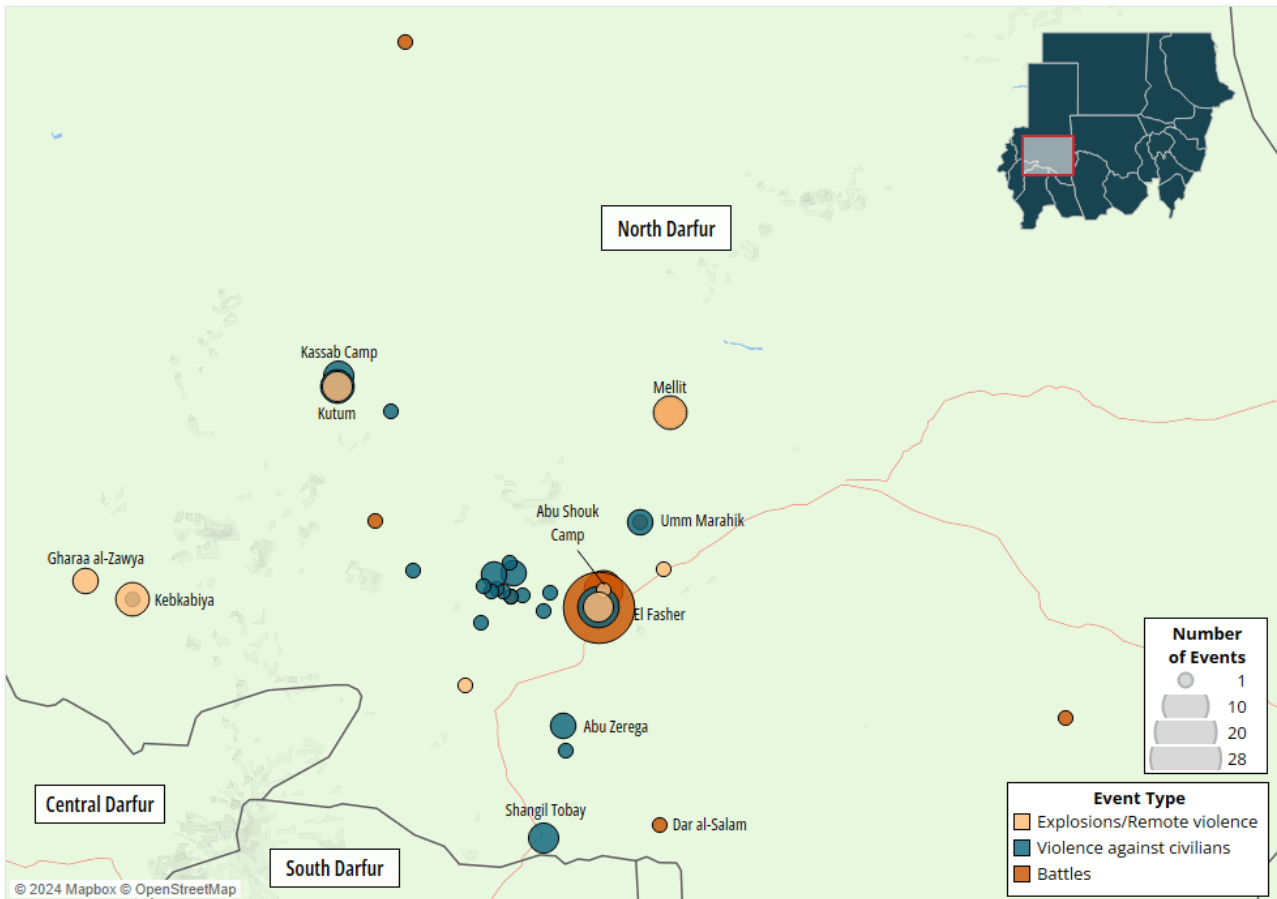
Ethnic-based attacks by the RSF and allied Arab militias are likely to escalate because of two reasons. First, the Zaghawa communities in North Darfur serve as strongholds for the Minnawi faction.⁵ Second, on 24 April, the Zaghawa native administration declared war against the RSF and offered a cut-off date for amnesty for fellow Zaghawa members of the RSF to withdraw. The RSF may abandon its retaliatory attacks aimed at the non-Arab communities, however, if the ongoing El Fasher battles stretch its capacity and force it to mobilize back toward the city to gain reinforcements.

The battle to control El Fasher, and changing alliances

Clashes between the SAF, backed by the Darfur Joint Forces, and the RSF continued over control of the SAF 6th Infantry Division camp that is located in El Fasher. The SAF and Darfur Joint Forces are employing an offensive strategy in El Fasher, switching to mass troop mobilization and sustained airstrikes and shelling. For its part, the RSF is fortifying its ranks with allied Arab militias moving in from all four Darfur states to execute a multi-front attack. During the reporting period, clashes and remote violence, such as airstrikes, were reported between the warring parties in El Fasher, Mellit, Kutum, Tawila, Dar al-Salam, and Kebkabiya localities in North Darfur (*see map below*). These locations have experienced repeated unrest since the onset of the conflict in April.

Political Violence Events in North Darfur

6 April - 10 May 2024



The groundwork being laid for an all-out battle in El Fasher foreshadows a devastating urban warfare scenario, which could exacerbate an already dire humanitarian situation in a city that shelters 1.5 million civilians, including 800,000 people who were internally displaced by the Darfur war and since April 2023.⁶ As RSF troops are positioned on the outskirts of El Fasher city and have easy access to rural villages, civilians remain trapped and highly vulnerable. Moreover, following the recent spike in violence targeting non-Arabs in North Darfur, there is a risk of retaliatory attacks against Arab civilians by non-Arab armed groups, especially after the Zaghawa native administration declared war against the RSF on 24 April. For example, around 16 April, the Joint Forces killed four Arab pastoralists after the RSF attacks on Zaghawa settlements. Meanwhile, the SAF is expected to continue ramping up its aerial bombardments in the region while the Joint Forces carry out ground incursions and clashes with the RSF, with civilians often caught in the crossfire of airstrikes and artillery fire. The situation remains volatile as the RSF is still stationed around El Fasher and SAF troops are positioning themselves to defend the city.⁷

The clashes' potential outcome is also spurring divisions and infighting within various groups in North Darfur. ACLED records at least four instances of infighting in North Darfur since the Darfur Joint Forces' announcement on 11 April that they would back the SAF, compared to only one in the 12 previous months. The Darfur Joint Forces umbrella was established as a neutral force consisting of signatories of the 2021 Juba Peace Agreement⁸ and deployed on 27 April 2023 to protect civilians in El Fasher.⁹ However, in the past year, various members of the Joint Forces have changed their alliances. For instance, at the end of March, the SLM/A-Transitional Council and the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces Alliance expressed their interest in forming another joint force — without the groups that support the SAF — to maintain their neutrality.¹⁰ On 18 April, the SLM/A-Transitional Council withdrew from its positions in El Fasher and reiterated its neutrality. Splinter groups departing from the Darfur Joint Forces have engaged in skirmishes with members of the Joint Forces as they began to withdraw from their positions in the city. The departure of the SLM/A-Transitional Council and the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces Alliance from the Darfur Joint Forces in April signifies the termination of the Joint Forces' impartiality, as it now consists only of armed groups that support the SAF.

In the meantime, on 22 April, Musa Hilal — the Mahamid tribal leader, former Janjaweed organizer, and current head of the Revolutionary Awakening Council militia — announced his support for the SAF.¹¹ The Mahamid clan is part of the camel-herding Abbala tribes of the Rizeigat, where RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (known as Hemedti) hails from. Some of Hilal's Mahamid

native administration counterparts expressed dissatisfaction with their leader’s decision and declared their continuing support for the RSF. Such divisions between native administrations and armed groups further complicate the conflict landscape and peace talks, as they introduce new actors with their own agendas.

The SAF closes in on the RSF in al-Gaili

In Khartoum state, the SAF, al-Baraa ibn Malik Brigade, Minnawi faction of SLM/A, and the JEM continue to close in on the RSF-controlled al-Gaili Petroleum Refinery. The RSF captured the refinery shortly after the outbreak of the war on 25 April 2023, and since then, clashes have erupted in the area on an almost monthly basis. After renouncing their neutrality, several armed movements within the Darfur Joint Forces — including SLM/A-Minnawi and JEM-Gibril Ibrahim — were deployed to battle frontlines in and around Khartoum and al-Jazirah states in support of the SAF after al-Jazeera fell [to the RSF in December 2023](#).¹² On 19 April 2024, the Darfur Joint Forces issued a statement announcing the initiation of battles to “liberate” the Refinery from the RSF.¹³ Following this statement, the SAF and allies captured key sites in the vicinity of the refinery, such as an RSF camp on nearby al-Jari mountain on 19 April and the General Intelligence Services building on 26 April.

The moves toward the Petroleum Refinery from three directions made it possible for the SAF to encircle the RSF, resembling the siege of the RSF-controlled Omdurman Radio and Television Commission buildings in February, when the SAF gradually cut off RSF supply and reinforcement routes. The SAF claims to have inflicted significant material losses and fatalities on the RSF as it advanced from al-Maaqil in the north, Kadaro in the south, and Hattab in the east¹⁴ and weakened the RSF’s frontline defenses.¹⁵ The SAF seems to be capitalizing on the RSF retreat and dispersal following the recent SAF territorial acquisition in Khartoum, and if it successfully gains control over the refinery, the SAF would sever the supply lines to the RSF strongholds across Khartoum.¹⁶

Categories: Analysis , Horn of Africa 17 May 2024

Regions: Africa

Tags: Sudan



Share

Related



Somalia Situation
Update: March 2024
| Renewed counter-insurgency operations expected as al-Shabaab regroup
31 May 2024



Is radical group violence on the rise in the EU? | ACLED Brief
31 May 2024



Mexico’s land and elections feuds threaten political figures in Oaxaca and Chiapas
29 May 2024

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED is the highest quality and most widely used real-time data and analysis source on political violence and protest around the world. Practitioners, researchers, journalists, and governments depend on ACLED for the latest reliable information on current conflict and disorder patterns.

ACLED is a registered non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status in the United States.

Please contact admin@acleddata.com with comments or queries regarding the ACLED dataset.



[Register](#) [Data Export Tool](#) [Codebook](#) [Contact](#) [Careers](#) [Cookie Policy](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [Opt-out preferences](#)

[Ethiopia Peace Observatory](#) [Cabo Ligado \(Mozambique\)](#)

© 2024 ACLED. All Rights Reserved.