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2.1.1. Actors involved and territorial control

As of early June 2024, without taking into account the situation in the three cities of Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman, Khartoum state was divided into territories in the east controlled by the SAF, central areas where control was contested between the SAF and the RSF and their respective allies, and areas in the west largely under the control of the RSF.549 The SAF coalition groups operating in the Khartoum area included the SAF's conventional units and special forces, newly recruited mustanfareen battalions, Darfuri armed groups550 including SLM-MM and JEM,551 and other militias such as the Islamist Al-Bara bin Malik Brigade.552

The SAF made territorial gains in the city of Omdurman during an offensive in the first quarter of 2024.553 By mid-February 2024, the SAF had broken the RSF's siege of its Engineers Corps base 554 and residential quarters of Old Omdurman.555 Further SAF advances were reported in eastern and southern Omdurman, as well as around Bahri.556 As of autumn 2024, much of Omdurman was reported to be under the army's control.557 The SAF had troops stationed at its Engineers Corps base558 in the city's south559 and, in northern Omdurman,560 it retained control of the Karari locality, which now serves as its military operations headquarters.561 As a result of the military campaign, the SAF was able to link its forces in the city's north with those stationed in the south.562 Despite the SAF's territorial gains, the RSF remained in control of large areas in the western and southern parts of Omdurman,563 although it was affected by infighting over leadership issues and supply shortages in western Omdurman564 and faced some defections towards the end of the reference period.565 During the following months, the conflict in the Khartoum area continued566 but remained largely frozen567 with both sides firmly entrenched in their positions,568 although the SAF made continuous 'incremental' territorial gains in Omdurman.569

In Khartoum city, most of which has been under RSF control since April 2023,570 the SAF remained unable to dislodge the effective RSF ground units positioned in the city.571 RSF fighters were entrenched in residential areas, occupying homes, businesses, and key infrastructure installations such as healthcare facilities.572 Meanwhile, the SAF held on to a few strategic positions, including the General Command Headquarters in the city centre and the Armoured Corps base in the south,573 both of which were under RSF siege. Meanwhile, the Strategic Corps base remained under RSF control.574

Following multi-pronged attacks launched by the RSF in Bahri in early September 2024, including in the surroundings of the Weapons Corps and Reconnaissance bases in Kadaro and

Hattab,575 the SAF launched a major offensive in late September 2024 against RSF positions in Khartoum and Bahri,576 conducting waves of infantry assaults supported by airstrikes and heavy artillery fire.577 During its offensive launched in late September 2024, the SAF gained control of arterial bridges and roads linking Omdurman with Khartoum city and gained a foothold on the eastern bank of the Nile578 in the al-Muqran district.579 After achieving rapid initial territorial gains between late September and mid-October 2024,580 the SAF's advances slowed down.581

As of November 2024, control was fiercely contested in Khartoum's al-Muqran district,582 although the SAF established a perimeter583 and held its ground in this strategically important area.584 Little change of control of territory was reported in the area as of late October 2024.585 Another embattled area was the surroundings of the Armoured Corps base further south.586 The SAF also took control of the Lamab neighbourhood, located north of the Armoured Corps base.587 In Khartoum, armed confrontations remained largely limited to areas within al-Muqran district.588

Most of the city of Bahri has been under RSF control,589 while the SAF held on to several strategic bases in the area.590 SAF troops were stationed at the besieged Signal Corps base in the city's south, at the Weapons Corps base further north in the Kadaro area,591 and at the Reconnaissance Corps base in the Hattab area.592

During the offensive that began in late September 2024, SAF units captured a bridge connecting Omdurman to Bahri,593 infiltrated Bahri594 and ended the RSF's sieges of the Reconnaissance Corps and Weapons Corps bases while capturing the neighbourhoods around the Weapons Corps base as well. The SAF also captured the city's al-Izirgab595 and al-Halfaya neighbourhoods596 and later also retook some areas in the Al-Samrab neighbourhood east of al-Halfaya. Meanwhile, the RSF maintained its stronghold in the Shambat district597 on the route towards the still besieged General Command and Signal Corps bases.598 In November 2024, SAF units managed to seize some further ground in Bahri, although the momentum of the SAF's ground offensive was waning. Well-trained RSF special units at Bahri's Paratroopers Corps base were reported to have repeatedly obstructed the SAF's advances.599 The RSF launched counterattacks in Bahri's al-Halfaya district in an attempt to reverse the SAF's territorial gains, pushing back the SAF and reportedly inflicting several casualties.600

According to a mid-November 2024 field report cited by the Sudan Tribune, the RSF only maintained a weak presence in several Bahri neighbourhoods, including Shambat, al-Sababi, al-Safiya and al-Shaabiya.601 In early December 2024, following SAF drone attacks, it was reportedly forced to retreat from some positions within Shambat as well as from the al-Safiya neighbourhood.602

At the same time, the RSF had highly trained special units positioned at the Paratroopers Corps base in Khartoum Bahri603 and remained in control of the Al-Jaili oil refinery, a key source of fuel for RSF troops604 situated north of Bahri.605 However, the refinery was being surrounded by SAF troops as of October 2024.606

Moreover, the reference period witnessed a series of SAF attacks on the heavily defended RSF-controlled Al-Jaili oil refinery in late April/early May607 and August 2024,608 an area that has

witnessed persistent armed confrontations during the current conflict.609

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