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2.1.2. Conflict dynamics and tactics

During the reference period, the parties to the conflict continued to engage in intense clashes around the cities of Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman,610 which remained the SAF's primary military objective.611 Shifting from a tactical defensive posture to an offensive one,612 the SAF launched a major military campaign in the Khartoum area in January 2024, focusing on retaking areas in Omdurman,613 but also attacking RSF units in Bahri.614 Civilians continued to be killed in heavy artillery crossfire in Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri.615

During the major offensive launched by the SAF against RSF positions in Khartoum and Bahri in late September 2024,616 the armed forces conducted waves of infantry assaults accompanied by airstrikes and heavy artillery fire.617 The SAF's attacks were supported by the Egyptian Air Force which helped the army to retake key strategic locations and disrupt RSF supply routes.618 In late November 2024, the SAF began to deploy – for the first time during this conflict – Turkish-manufactured Bayraktar drones to target RSF artillery positions within Khartoum state.619

Although armed confrontations largely centred around strategically important installations, there were numerous reports of impacts on civilians, as pointed out by the UN Secretary-General.620 The deployment of explosive weapons with large area effects in the densely inhabited areas of Khartoum state has led to significant numbers of conflict-related deaths and injuries.621 These attacks included the use of drone-dropped munitions against persons wearing civilian clothes.622 An increase in civilian casualties at the hands of the warring parties was reported in autumn 2024623 when dozens of civilians were killed or injured by airstrikes and shelling during the early days of the SAF's offensive.624 A late December 2024 SAF airstrike on a fuel station in Khartoum left at least 28 people dead and dozens injured.625 Moreover, according to the UN, dozens of young men from Bahri's al-Halfaya neighbourhood were reportedly executed, allegedly at the hands of the SAF and its allied Al-Bara bin Malik Brigade.626

The RSF carried out repeated heavy artillery attacks on Omdurman's old neighbourhoods627 and drone and artillery strikes on civilian areas (markets, medical facilities and other service areas) in northern Omdurman's SAF-controlled Karari locality,628 killing and injuring dozens of people,629 including in December 2024, when what was reported as the RSF's 'heaviest artillery shelling yet' left at least 65 people dead.630 The RSF has also been accused of planting mines in northern Bahri, where it maintained control over some areas.631 In the outskirts of Khartoum, unaccompanied and poor children were being targeted for recruitment by the RSF.632

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