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2.2.2. Conflict dynamics and tactics

In May 2024, the RSF supported by allied tribal militia started laying siege on El Fasher in North Darfur,[702] described as the 'last stronghold' of the SAF in Darfur.[703] The siege of the town and surrounding areas was still in place as of October 2024, with over 900 000 people trapped in the city under dire conditions.[704] As of November 2024, the city remained under siege being subjected to daily artillery shelling targeting markets, the southern neighbourhoods, the military base and Abou Shouk IDP camp.[705]

As of June 2024, thousands of RSF fighters reportedly controlled the northern and eastern districts of the city while encircling the rest.[706] The October 2024 report by the UN Secretary-General noted a number of major assaults carried out by the RSF in the El Fasher area from August 2024,[707] with an intensification of fighting in September.[708] In October 2024, heavy fighting occurred in areas north of El Fasher, upon which military reinforcements were sent to the joint forces fighting the RSF in that area.[709] OHCHR based on its monitoring noted attacks by the RSF on the city from May to November 2024, employing heavy artillery shelling and suicide drones, while SAF forces countered the RSF advances with airstrikes and shelling leading to civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure.[710] It further documented 15 artillery attacks on Abou Shouk IDP camp, amounting to a direct attack on civilians, while Zamzam IDP camp south of El Fasher was hit by shelling at the beginning of December 2024.[711] Sources further reported that the RSF targeted healthcare infrastructure in El Fasher, shelling two hospitals on several occasions as well as a medical centre,[712] leading to the loss of civilian life and damage to health infrastructure.[713]

In July 2024, the JFASM managed to take control of the border area between Sudan, Libya and Chad, cutting off potential arms supply lines to the RSF from Libya.[714] At the beginning of October 2024, the JFASM reported to have seized a strategically important area from the RSF north of Kutum, among them an RSF base in Bir Mazza.[715] The SAF and allied militia that same month made gains in West Darfur on the border with Chad,[716] claiming to have retaken Kulbus and Jebel Awum from the RSF.[717]

The October 2024 report by the UN Secretary-General noted that in different parts of Darfur, especially West Darfur, violence including summary executions, sexual violence and forced displacement mainly carried out by the RSF and allied militia was characterised by ethnic motivations.[718] For example, arson attacks at the beginning of October 2024 affected fourteen villages predominantly inhabited by Zaghawa near Kutum, North Darfur.[719] In April 2024, during the RSF military campaign to seize Mellit, a town 60 km northeast of El Fasher, 20 attacks on civilians were recorded by ACLED. Reportedly these attacks disproportionally targeted

Zaghawa and included extrajudicial killings, torture, widespread property destruction, and looting.720 That same month, 15 villages west of El Fasher predominantly inhabited by Zaghawa were reportedly attacked by RSF troops that committed mass killings and enforced disappearances.721 For more information on ethnically motivated killings, see section of 2.4, notably 2.4.2 of the previous report (EUAA report Sudan - Country Focus, April 2024).

The SAF carried out indiscriminate airstrikes in Darfur, including in Nyala in South Darfur, El Geneina in West Darfur, and El Daein in East Darfur, resulting in civilian casualties and displacement.722 Throughout the reference period, media sources and rights groups reported SAF airstrikes, some of which hit civilian infrastructure or killed civilians.723 The RSF employed indiscriminate artillery shelling resulting in civilian deaths and significant damage in affected areas.724

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