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2.3.1. Actors involved and territorial control

The RSF as of October 2024 controlled most areas of Kordofan apart from several towns with SAF army garrisons[763] and areas controlled by the SPLM-N-al-Hilu, mostly in South Kordofan.[764]
In West Kordofan, largely controlled by the RSF, the only areas reportedly still under state control were Al Nuhud, Babanusa, the Heglig oil field and the city of Lagawa.[765] In South Kordofan, the state capital Kadugli remained under SAF control during the reference period,[766] with roads leading out of the city blocked by either the RSF or SPLM-N forces.[767] In North Kordofan, the SAF held on to the state capital El Obeid, which in June 2024 came under siege by the RSF.[768]

SPLM-N-al-Hilu, a faction under its leader Abdelaziz al-Hilu that seeks self-governance for the Nuba, was operating in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan,[769] reportedly holding territories there.[770] It has remained neutral in the SAF-RSF war, having occasionally clashed with both sides,[771] while seeming to be more open to cooperation with the SAF.[772]

According to Ayin Network, the RSF have resorted to recruiting local militias in the Kordofans rather than deploying its official soldiers, leading to individual militia leaders becoming de facto local rulers with fragile RSF alignment especially in West and North Kordofan. This in turn led to internal conflicts, such as clashes between the RSF and a former allied militia in Umm Ruwaba, North Kordofan in September 2024.[773] Sources similarly reported tensions between the SAF and allied militias in Kordofan, with the SAF in September 2024 being confronted with threats by a group in Kadugli that previously allied with the army,[774] and clashes erupting between the SAF and local allied forces in Al Nuhud in November 2024.[775] Both conflict parties reportedly enlisted militias and mercenaries locally, supplying them with weapons while maintaining only loose command and control.[776]

The Abyei region, disputed between Sudan and South Sudan, as of October 2024 had about 400 South Sudanese security forces stationed in its southern part, in violation of the demilitarised status of the region.[777] The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) as of August 2024 had 2 854 troops stationed in the region.[778]

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