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2.2. The Sudanese authorities, the Sudanese Armed Forces [SAF] and main allies

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: June 2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports and query: Country Focus 2024, 1.1.3. (b) (e); Country Focus 2025, 1.3. (a) (e), 1.4.; Security 2025, 1.2.1 (a); COI Update 2025 1., 2.1.. Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

The SAF, led by Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and dominated by members of Arab tribes from central Sudan, includes the Land Force, Sudanese Navy, Sudanese Air Force, SAF Military Intelligence, and Border Guards, and the Central Reserve Police (CRP) also referred to as '*Abu Tira'*.

After the outbreak of the conflict, Al-Burhan and the local authorities imposed or expanded the state of emergency declared in 2021 to most states, granting security forces extensive powers and immunity in the course of their duties. This confirms the SAF and its allied groups as the main state actor in the country.

Air superiority has been a key advantage for the SAF, which has enhanced its capabilities since late 2023 and early 2024 with combat drones acquired from Türkiye and Iran. Additionally, the SAF reportedly received arms shipments and aerial support from Egypt.

The SAF strengthened its operational capabilities, including personnel numbers, aviation systems, and defence industries. However, it continued to face structural challenges such as lack of discipline, political infighting, and competing personal interests. Since 2005, the SAF has been subject to sanctions under UN Security Council Resolution 1591, including an arms embargo due to its involvement in the Darfur conflict.

The Sudanese army oversees a network of national and international companies across various sectors, including defence, agriculture, banking, mining, transport, construction, and private security.

Several armed groups have backed the SAF in the conflict, including:

- The **Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North-Agar (SPLM-N-Agar**), signatory of the JPA, is led by Malik Agar, member of the *Ingessana* tribe and deputy chairman of the Transitional Sovereign Council. The group is based in Blue Nile State and supports the SAF. It is to be noted that the SPLM-N-Agar was originally part of the **Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N**) which split in two factions in 2017. For the other faction, namely the **Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North-al-Hilu (SPLM-N-al-Hilu)**, see 2.4. Other armed groups.

- The **Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)**, signatory of the JPA, is an Islamist rebel group established in 2003, mostly dominated by the Kobe, a Zaghawa sub-group. According to a source, the group split into two new groups in August 2023 after the suspension of several key leaders for engaging in a meeting with General Dagalo. The JEM, along with **Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minawi (SLM-MM)**, announced its intention to abandon its neutrality in November 2023, accusing the RSF of systematic killings in captured towns. It declared its commitment to protecting civilians and sided with SAF against the RSF. The group was involved in active fighting against the RSF in Khartoum, Darfur (especially in El Fasher), the Kordofans, Al Jazirah, and in the East region.

- The **SLM-MM**, signatory of the JPA, is a largely Zaghawa faction controlling some territories in North Darfur and led by the Governor of the Darfur region. First neutral, the faction allied with the SAF since November 2023 and formed, together with the JEM, a large portion of the pro-SAF forces fighting in El Fasher. The **Sudan Liberation Movement-Mustafa Tambour (SLM-Tambour)**, signatory of the JPA, is allied with the SAF since the beginning of the conflict and is mostly present in Central Darfur. It is to be noted that the SLM-MM and the SLM-Tambour were originally part of the **Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM)** that split into factions in 2005. For the **SLM-AW,** see 2.4. Other armed groups.

- **Sudanese Alliance (SA)** is a group led by West Darfur Governor Khamis Abdallah Abkar. The Governor was killed in June 2023 after he accused the RSF and Arab armed militia of killing civilians in El Geneina and called for international protection.

- **Islamist militias**, such as the Al-Bara bin Malik Brigade.

- **Civilian volunteers** known as 'Popular Resistance' or 'National Civil Resistance', Popular Mobilisation ('*mustanfareen*') battalions: since June 2023, the SAF has encouraged civilian mobilisation and armed movements across the country.

- The **National Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)** and the **Eastern Corps**, both Eritrea-backed militias.

Finally, it should be noted that some of the above-mentioned armed groups, namely the SLM-MM, the JEM and the Sudanese Alliance, are part of a coalition called the **Joint Force of Armed**

Struggle Movements (JFASM), also known as the 'Darfur Joint Forces' or 'Joint Forces'. Following the involvement of the SLM-MM and the JEM along with smaller armed groups who joined the SAF in November 2023, the coalition formally announced the abandonment of its previous neutrality and declared war on the RSF in April 2024.

For additional information see also 4.3.4. a) Presence, methods and tactics of actors.

The SAF and affiliated armed militias have committed widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings of civilians as well as enforced disappearance. Arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals based on perceived political affiliations or ethnic origin and child recruitment were also reported. Prisoners detained by the SAF endured severe overcrowding, food shortages, inadequate healthcare, poor ventilation, and physical abuse. Reports indicate that detainees were subjected to torture, starvation, sexual violence, beatings, and other cruel treatment, with credible evidence of deaths in custody. The SAF also used hunger and starvation as a weapon of war and blocked, looted and exploited humanitarian aid. The SAF has also reportedly used chemical weapons on at least two occasions, alongside ‘indiscriminate bombing’ of civilian infrastructure, attacks on schools, markets and hospitals and extrajudicial executions.

Sudan retains the death penalty for ordinary crimes, and since the onset of the conflict, individuals rejecting the war or refusing to align with the army have faced charges of espionage for the RSF or being part of 'sleeper cells', offences punishable by death.

For additional information regarding targeted human rights violation at the hand of the SAF see also 3.1.2. Nuba from the Kordofans, 3.1.3. Arabs from Darfur and the Kordofans, 3.3. Members of the Resistance committees (RCs) and Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), 3.4. Members of political parties, unions and civil society organisations, 3.5. Community leaders, human rights activists and lawyers, 3.6. Journalists and other media workers, 3.7. Humanitarian and healthcare workers, 3.8. Civilians from areas associated with the opposing warring party, 3.9. Women and girls, 3.10. Children, 3.11. Persons with diverse SOGIESC.

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