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1.2.2. International actors

Despite the domestic roots of Sudan's current war,[306](#) the conflict has seen the involvement of multiple countries as providers of support in the form of arms, funds, or diplomatic backing,[307](#) including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Türkiye, Qatar, Iran, Algeria, Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Russia, Chad, and South Sudan.[308](#) This section provides information on the conflict-related role of the key actors: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Türkiye.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE has been assessed to be the RSF's primary foreign backer[309](#) although Abu Dhabi has consistently rejected such claims.[310](#) According to US intelligence sources, quoted by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), the UAE provided the group with advanced Chinese-manufactured drones, small arms, heavy machine guns, artillery, mortars, and vehicles.[311](#) Amnesty International (AI) found that the UAE also retransferred imported Chinese GB50A guided bombs and 155mm AH-4 howitzers to the RSF.[312](#) In addition, since 2024, a UAE-based security company with links to Abu Dhabi's political leadership[313](#) has reportedly facilitated the transfer of Colombian mercenaries to Sudan to assist the RSF.[314](#) In return for backing the RSF, the UAE has allegedly sought the RSF's cooperation in protecting UAE interests in Sudan.[315](#) These include maintaining the UAE's access to Sudan's gold,[316](#) safeguarding investments in agriculture,[317](#) and securing influence along the Red Sea coast.[318](#) The UAE's support for the RSF was also reportedly driven by concerns about a perceived threat from Islamist currents aligned with the SAF.[319](#)

To transfer military supplies to the RSF, the UAE reportedly relied on logistical supply routes through eastern Chad, southeastern Libya, northeastern Somalia, amongst others.[320](#) From late 2025, there were signs that the UAE was rerouting its lines of support for the RSF, as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Somalia began to deny the UAE overflight rights, while authorities in eastern Libya imposed a temporary closure of Kufra airport.[321](#) In early 2026, Reuters pointed to sources indicating that the UAE had funded the construction of a camp in Ethiopia near the border with Blue Nile state to train RSF fighters, also sending military instructors to the site. As of January 2026, Ethiopian security services noted that 4 300 RSF fighters were receiving military training at the location.[322](#) The UAE did not appear to have reduced its support for the RSF since the start of the 2026 Iran war.[323](#) In March 2026, the UAE was reportedly seeking new aerial transport routes to support the RSF, running via countries such as Ethiopia and the Central African Republic (CAR).[324](#)

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, which seeks to safeguard its security³²⁵ and economic interests in the Red Sea region,³²⁶ has supported the SAF through economic aid³²⁷ while making repeated efforts at diplomatic mediation.³²⁸ Riyadh adopted an outwardly neutral stance despite its preference for the institutional continuity granted by the SAF and the Al-Burhan-led de facto government.³²⁹ Saudi Arabia has thus decried violence by the RSF and directed veiled criticism at the UAE for its ‘foreign interference’ in the Sudan conflict.³³⁰ In January 2026, in what was seen as a response to the UAE’s alleged logistical support to the RSF, Saudi Arabia was reported to have played a key role in facilitating a significant arms deal between Sudan and Pakistan³³¹ that encompassed the provision of Karakoram-8 aircraft, over 200 drones, and air defence systems to the SAF.³³² While in the first months of the 2026 Iran war, there were signs that Saudi Arabia was showing heightened caution in its backing of the SAF due to the latter’s links to Iran,³³³ subsequent months saw Riyadh reinforcing its support for the SAF. A Sudan-Saudi Arabia cooperation agreement was signed in August 2026.³³⁴

Egypt

Egypt has been seeking the preservation of Sudan’s territorial integrity³³⁵ and a centralised Sudanese state led by the military.³³⁶ Its support for the SAF is underpinned by historical ties between the two countries’ armed forces³³⁷ and its interest in maintaining stability along the Egyptian-Sudanese border.³³⁸ Following the outbreak of the Sudan war, Egypt initially sought to maintain an official stance of neutrality. However, tensions between Egypt and the RSF erupted almost instantly when the RSF captured Egyptian soldiers³³⁹ stationed at Merowe Airport in April 2023. As the war unfolded, Egypt’s military involvement evolved from covert provision of military gear, logistics and intelligence to a significantly more overt and consequential form of military engagement.³⁴⁰ These included alleged Egyptian air operations against RSF positions,³⁴¹ joint operational coordination with the SAF (since October 2025),³⁴² deployment of Egyptian military personnel near front lines,³⁴³ and the encirclement of a large Egyptian military unit by Taasis/RSF forces in Blue Nile state in March 2026.³⁴⁴ Advanced military drones based at an airfield in Egypt have been carrying out strikes against the RSF.³⁴⁵ Since the capture of El Fasher by the RSF, Egypt both reinforced its diplomatic efforts to end the war³⁴⁶ and stepped up its military support for the SAF.³⁴⁷

Türkiye

Since the start of the war, Türkiye has supported the SAF by providing military gear³⁴⁸ such as Bayraktar Akıncı³⁴⁹ and Bayraktar TB2 drones and large numbers of warheads.³⁵⁰ In the earlier stages of the conflict, Turkish defence firms also maintained contacts with the RSF to hedge potential risks arising from the conflict. However, as the war progressed, Türkiye came to perceive the RSF’s decentralised, mercenary-style model of territorial control as a threat to its interest in the Red Sea region. By late 2025, this reassessment had led to a more outright defence alignment with the SAF, resulting in increased volumes of military aid, shipments of Bayraktar drones and technical assistance.³⁵¹ In the diplomatic sphere, Türkiye has persistently sought a role as a future mediator between Sudan’s warring parties³⁵² and between Sudan and the UAE.³⁵³

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