

# Sudan Crisis 2024 – What you need to know

## Background

Sudan is a beautiful country in northeast Africa, just south of Egypt on the coast of the Red Sea. The country sits at the crossroads of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. This is one of the more culturally and ethnically diverse countries in the world. Over 50 million people live here and it is the third largest country in Africa by area.

A civil war broke out in Sudan in April 2023 between the national army and a renegade paramilitary force:

- **The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)** - the country's official military that includes the army, air force, and navy.
- **The Rapid Support Forces (RSF)** - a regional paramilitary group created by a previous military regime.

A variety of intelligence units, police forces, and local militias have taken sides in the conflict as well. The RSF also hires mercenaries from across the Sahel. Some of Sudan's rebel groups from previous wars have taken sides, while others have remained neutral and are defending their own territory and people groups.

Today, the RSF controls almost all of western Sudan and parts of central Sudan including Khartoum. SAF controls the north and east of the country and parts of central Sudan. The past few months have seen mostly limited territorial gains and losses with two major RSF breakthroughs in south-central and south-eastern parts of the country. It appears neither side can achieve a decisive victory anytime soon. And it is the Sudanese people who are bearing the heaviest burdens.

**You can find the latest up-to-date information about the current situation in Sudan at this website:**

<https://operationbrokensilence.org/>



**Sudan is home to the largest and most dangerous humanitarian emergency, far outpacing every other crisis in the world.**

Extreme violence has gutted the capital city of Khartoum. Countless towns and villages are being destroyed. Many farmers cannot work. The economy has disintegrated and prices of basic goods are skyrocketing. Most schools are closed.

*But this war is not just between two armed groups; it is also a war on the Sudanese people.* The RSF [is targeting](#) ethnic African minorities for extermination and SAF is blocking aid access to large swaths of the country. War crimes are being committed on a large-scale by both sides. The result?

- Nearly 26 million Sudanese —half of the entire country— are facing high levels of acute food insecurity. 14 area famine warnings [have been issued](#) and over 750,000 Sudanese are already trying to survive in famine conditions.
- Nearly 11 million people have been forced to flee their homes or have left Sudan altogether.
- Over 70% of Sudan’s healthcare system has collapsed and preventable disease outbreaks are becoming common.
- Over 19 million children of school-going age no longer have a classroom to attend.

No one knows the true death toll due to ongoing violence, but a conservative estimate based on available data suggests more than 75,000 people have already perished from violence and hunger.



## **Why are SAF and RSF fighting?**

SAF and RSF used to be allies, but that changed after they overthrew a civilian reform government in October 2021. RSF commander Mohamed Dagalo (aka Hemeti) sees himself as Sudan's rightful dictator, while SAF generals believe they are the true government. *It's worth noting that the vast majority of Sudanese want neither in charge of the country.*

There are also significant ethnic dimensions in this war that cannot be ignored:

- **RSF**- Top RSF commanders and most of their fighters hail from Arab tribes in the western Darfur region. Many RSF fighters adhere to an extremely racist, Arab-supremacist ideology. The belief system states that Darfur's historic African tribal groups must be cleansed from the region and that all other Sudanese Arabs are inferior.
- **SAF** - Top army brass are mostly Nile Valley Arabs, representing the most elite and privileged ethnic groups in the country. Unlike the RSF, the army is a fairly diverse force with soldiers from most parts of the country. Arab racism toward African tribes does exist in SAF, which explains why members of the force have executed civilians on an ethnic basis as well.

Gunfire between the two sides erupted in Khartoum on April 15, 2023. Both sides failed to decapitate each others' leadership and extreme warfare quickly spread across the country.

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