

Sudan Conflict Monitor

24



Access as a weapon: Parallel governance and civilian squeeze intensify

Executive summary:

January 2026 confirmed the structural entrenchment of Sudan's conflict system. The war has moved beyond fluid contestation into a consolidated architecture in which military coercion, administrative control, economic extraction, and diplomatic positioning reinforce one another. Control—not resolution—now defines the operating logic of both SAF and RSF.

Civilian visibility increased, but civilian leverage did not. Despite intensified diaspora diplomacy and renewed international engagement, Sudanese civilian actors remained structurally excluded from decision-making on ceasefire terms, governance arrangements, and security outcomes. Armed actors retained agenda-setting authority, narrowing political space and reinforcing a model of conflict management that sidelines civilian constituencies.

Humanitarian access has become a lever rather than a neutral mechanism for relief. Competing directives issued by the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) and the RSF-aligned National Authority for Humanitarian Aid (NAHA) created a zero-sum regulatory environment, politicizing aid delivery and forcing humanitarian actors into untenable operational choices. Simultaneously, harassment of Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) and community-led responders deepened the fragmentation of humanitarian governance, shifting life-saving response into informal systems with heightened protection risks.

On the battlefield, drone warfare has normalized and expanded, with external enabling support embedding aerial strikes into routine operations. Civilian harm—including airstrikes, detention campaigns, starvation conditions in Darfur’s camps, and property confiscation—has become structurally absorbed into conflict practice rather than treated as aberrational violations. The normalization of mass atrocities is eroding public trust, undermining return prospects, and hardening grievances in ways that narrow pathways to settlement.

Economically, Sudan’s collapse has evolved into a fragmented war economy on both sides of the front lines. In SAF-held areas, shrinking state revenues coexist with decentralized petty extraction embedded in security and justice institutions. In RSF-controlled territories, toll-based systems and ad hoc financial mechanisms sustain coercive governance in the absence of formal fiscal authority. Revenue generation is now tied directly to control over movement, detention, trade, and humanitarian access—creating durable incentives for conflict endurance.

Internationally, convergence has increased without coercion. Even as the United States convened a Sudan humanitarian donor fund event in Washington, D.C., on February 3, 2026 Quad diplomacy, EU sanctions, and AU-led coordination initiatives aligned rhetorically but did not impose meaningful costs or materially alter battlefield or war-economy incentives. As long as coercive revenue systems remain intact and civilian harm carries limited strategic consequence, both SAF and RSF appear positioned to absorb external pressure rather than modify their behavior, leaving conflict dynamics largely insulated from diplomatic engagement.



Security Developments



Trend: coercive consolidation and widened battlespace

1. Efforts to consolidate control continue in Darfur and Kordofan

By the end of January 2026, the Rapid Support Force (RSF)—alongside aligned armed actors, Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPL-N) (al-Hilu)—had consolidated near-total control over Darfur and large parts of Kordofan, a strategically significant region of more than 390,000 km² linking western Sudan to the White Nile corridor. This consolidation has reshaped both military and political dynamics, anchoring the RSF’s influence over key population centers, agricultural zones, and transit routes while constraining SAF’s ability to project authority beyond air power and allied militias.

In January 2026, both parties continued to focus on advancing their military activities against one another, consolidating control over civilians, and coercing them. In Darfur and parts of Kordofan, [violence](#) against civilians, increasing internal [displacement](#), [restrictions](#) on movement, and the [degradation](#) of infrastructure have functioned as tools to secure control rather than as by-products of fighting.

Across multiple theatres, [contested sieges](#) became a central operational mechanism within this coercive logic. Armed actors [sought](#) to indirectly shape control by contesting access, supply routes, and encirclement conditions, whereas opposing forces focused on disrupting siege pressure rather than pursuing decisive battlefield engagements.

2. RSF strategy: control of population, routes, and fear

RSF activity during January 2026 continued to center on coercive territorial

consolidation, prioritizing control over civilians and movement rather than maneuver warfare. Across North Darfur, parts of South Kordofan, and into [Blue Nile State](#)—extending toward the [Chadian border](#)—RSF advances and conducts pressure operations through January 2026.

In mid to late December 2025, RSF pressure around El Fasher drove large-scale civilian [displacement](#) although movement along exit routes was restricted, consistent with siegelike conditions. RSF-SAF [clashes](#) in South Kordofan during this period coincided with actions and [messaging](#) by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), underscoring how RSF siege tactics and [population pressure](#) reshaped local conflict dynamics rather than reflecting a shift in RSF strategy.

For two years, Dilling was been under sustained RSF [siege](#), with movement restricted and civilians facing mounting protection risks. In this context, SPLM-N publicly [urged](#) civilians to evacuate towns in South Kordofan and called on the SAF forces in Kadugli and Dilling to surrender. The statement implicitly acknowledged the military reality created by RSF pressure on supply routes and urban access points, particularly [around Dilling](#).

3. Relief of the Dilling siege relies on old strategies: air power and allied militias

In January 2026, SAF [broke](#) the prolonged RSF [siege of Dilling](#), disrupting RSF control over access routes and alleviating immediate pressure on encircled areas. They did this through a functional sequencing of air power and ground action by allied militias, which enabled allied ground elements to reopen corridors and contest RSF control without establishing durable territorial governance.

This strategy is worrisome for several reasons. SAF air operations were primarily punitive and disruptive, with strikes reported in and around urban and peri-urban areas that damaged [civilian infrastructure](#) and services alongside military targets. Rather than being followed by unified ground consolidation, these strikes relied on heterogeneous SAF-aligned militias and local armed groups to contest or hold terrain. While this sequencing disrupted the [RSF siege](#) pressure around Dilling, it did not translate into durable territorial control, leaving the area vulnerable to renewed contestation. The January pattern reinforces SAF’s continued substitution of air power for cohesive ground command, delegating control to allied actors operating under fragmented structures. This may produce short-term tactical gains but they are structurally fragile, increasing the likelihood of cyclical violence rather than stabilization. It also reflects continuity in SAF strategies in which air power offsets ground limitations without resolving underlying command fragmentation.



4. Drone warfare: deepening external involvement and normalized civilian harm

January 2026 produced new evidence of the depth and operational centrality of [Egypt's involvement](#) in SAF drone operations, marking a shift from generalized regional backing to more direct, enabling support. Reporting during the month indicated that Turkish-supplied [Akinci drones](#) operated by SAF were launched from a discreet Egyptian airbase near the borders of Egypt, Libya, Chad, and Darfur, enabling sustained long-range strikes against RSF logistics hubs and convoy routes in Darfur. This reporting clarified Egypt's role not merely as a diplomatic backer but as a critical logistical and operational enabler of SAF air power, significantly extending the reach and persistence of SAF drone campaigns.

At the same time, January saw continued—and geographically widened—drone activity with direct civilian impact. In South Kordofan, RSF [drone strikes](#) were reported in and around Dilling in mid-January, coinciding with ground clashes and disrupting civilian movement along key access routes. In Blue Nile State, [drone](#) surveillance and strike activity targeted supply corridors and contested settlements, contributing to displacement and further restricting access to markets and services. In Darfur, drone strikes continued to hit logistics routes, urban peripheries, and [civilians fleeing](#) the fighting, rather than military targets.

These incidents confirm that drone warfare is no longer episodic or escalatory but normalized, embedded into routine operations by both SAF and RSF. RSF capabilities—[bolstered](#) by UAE support—include at least 51 loitering munitions (LM), which are a subtype of UAVs (sometimes referred to as “suicide drones”) recorded in early February 2026 near the former UNAMID Camp in Nyala, South Darfur. Financing channels linked to Egypt for SAF [weapons](#) procurement, alongside Iranian and Russian supply lines, further underscore how drone warfare in Sudan has become tightly enmeshed with regional rivalries.

Political Developments



Trend: process without leverage; fragmentation without accountability

1. Return to Khartoum: sovereignty signaling without de-escalation

In January 2026, SAF reaffirmed its strict preconditions for negotiations, using refusal to compromise as a means to reinforce its claim to exclusive state authority and external legitimacy rather than advancing de-escalation. In January 2026, Sudan's SAF-aligned government **returned** to Khartoum for the first time since the outbreak of war. **Authorities framed** the move as a restoration of **legitimacy** and administrative continuity, emphasizing the capital as the uncontested seat of government rather than as a transitional or negotiated space. The return was not accompanied by confidence-building measures or any softening of negotiation positions. Instead, it served as a projection of state recovery while active conflict persisted across Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile—reinforcing a model of authority rooted in territorial reoccupation and institutional survival rather than compromise or inclusion. To reinforce claims of sovereign authority and state continuity, SAF-aligned ministers met with their Egyptian counterparts to advance forward-looking **economic and reconstruction cooperation**, including discussions on humanitarian, infrastructure, and institutional support in Cairo. These engagements were presented publicly as technical planning, but also signaled an effort to project normalization and regime continuity even as active conflict persisted.

Regionally, SAF leadership intensified security-centric diplomacy with Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, and South Sudan to consolidate its international support and legitimacy. Efforts included Malik Agar's **meetings** with President Salva Kiir in Juba and Burhan's **security talks** with the Qatari Emir on January 26 and 27, respectively, as well as Burhan's **visit** in early January to Turkey. Furthermore, Burhan **met** with the Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister to discuss prospects for ending the war, bilateral coordination, and preparations for a Strategic Coordination Council, while Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki separately **received** Sudanese ministers in Asmara.

These engagements were complemented by Sudan’s participation—alongside Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—in [coordinated diplomatic](#) positioning on Somalia, including aligned public statements, parallel bilateral engagements with Mogadishu and shared messaging in regional fora emphasizing Somali sovereignty and opposition to external interference. This coordination was widely interpreted as an effort to counter UAE influence in the Red Sea–Horn of Africa region and to situate Sudan within a security-aligned bloc asserting state-centric order in the region.

Egyptian coordination remained central in January 2026. At the Egypt-hosted Sudan coordination meeting, Cairo publicly reaffirmed its “[red lines](#)” on Sudan, emphasizing preservation of state institutions, rejection of armed non-state alternatives, and opposition to any political arrangement that could legitimize the RSF or fragment Sudanese sovereignty. These positions directly reinforced SAF’s insistence on RSF withdrawal and disarmament as prerequisites for talks. In parallel, Egyptian authorities launched the largest foreign-resident [enforcement](#) and expedited repatriation campaign, disproportionately targeting Sudanese nationals and reportedly at the behest of Sudanese authorities to force the return of war victims to the depopulated capital. Arabic media [linked](#) the timing and scope of the campaign to intensified Cairo–Khartoum security coordination, situating population control and migration enforcement within the same regional security logic articulated in the coordination meeting—one that prioritizes state authority, border control, and the containment of armed non-state actors.

2. RSF: tactical engagement as political power

In January 2026, RSF engagement became more explicitly reactive to regional diplomacy, reinforcing a pattern of feigned cooperation rather than genuine engagement. RSF-linked actors publicly criticized the latest IGAD [Roadmap](#) for peace in Sudan, accusing the body of bias toward SAF and rejecting mediation frameworks that prioritize state institutions. A [statement](#) by the RSF-aligned Sudan Founding Alliance (TASIS) characterized IGAD as lacking neutrality, signaling RSF resistance to any process that constrains its parallel governance project.

Throughout January and February, TASIS coalition leaders held an extended retreat in a regional capital to finalize their cabinet. In particular, the coalition addressed the challenge of operating as a parallel governing authority without a centralized budget to finance operations and public services in RSF-controlled areas. Proposals included establishing formal taxation and customs systems. However, internal disagreements among RSF constituencies over representation continued to delay cabinet appointments. Furthermore, RSF authorities advanced institutional entrenchment through [parallel banking](#) arrangements and civil administrative structures in Darfur, despite [limited capacity](#) to deliver basic services—reinforcing a pattern in which RSF engagement prioritizes reputational positioning over meaningful governance or de-escalation.

These narratives stand in contrast with [international assessments](#) that continue to privilege Port Sudan–based institutions as the sole legitimate state authority.

January 2026 is notable not for the persistence of RSF legitimacy claims, but for the growing disconnect between those claims and the international system's willingness to accommodate them, as major external actors increasingly view the conflict as locked into military deadlock rather than a [negotiable transition](#). Rather than moderating behavior to regain credibility, RSF engagement during this period functioned primarily as reputational cover amid continued coercive practices, underscoring the limits of dialogue-based leverage over an actor increasingly insulated from political isolation.

3. Active voices, limited leverage: civilian politics in constriction

Civilian political engagement during this period remained highly active but was structurally excluded from conflict decision-making, with efforts concentrated on diaspora diplomacy rather than on formal negotiations or agenda-setting roles related to ceasefire, governance, or security arrangements. On January 19, the former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, leading the Somoud alliance, [conducted](#) a European tour (including Oslo, The Hague, Paris, Berlin, and UK engagements) to mobilize EU and UK backing for a US-led roadmap—endorsing the Quad's [proposed](#) humanitarian truce linked to a civilian transition and [warning](#) against mediation tracks that reintegrate former regime or Islamist actors.

This advocacy was accompanied by more explicit political positioning, which clarified Somoud's red lines but also narrowed its engagement space. During European outreach, representatives [raised concerns](#) about the [obstructive](#) role of Islamist-linked actors and former regime networks in peace efforts, while also objecting to mediation tracks perceived as legitimizing those actors - a framing that some mediators and diplomatic interlocutors viewed as complicating neutrality and engagement. Mediation design was also [contested](#), with Swiss- and French-linked consultation tracks—informal dialogue initiatives supported by European governments and NGOs to explore pathways toward a political process—criticized as legitimizing former regime actors, prompting withdrawals by allied civilian movements.

Diaspora-based civilian mobilization extended beyond Somoud. In January 2026, in the UK, the Darfur Union in the United Kingdom [combined](#) humanitarian advocacy and documentation with explicit political positioning—publicly supporting SAF military advances, welcoming the lifting of sieges in parts of Kordofan, and calling for international accountability against RSF leaders and alleged external backers. This illustrates the fragmentation of civilian space, with some emphasizing neutrality and ceasefire, and others aligning with one actor or another.

Despite sustained civilian advocacy, domestic political influence remained limited. With no access to formal negotiation forums or decision-making structures, Sudanese civilian actors increasingly relied on localized and diaspora-linked mobilization, amplified through humanitarian and human rights advocacy, as surrogate political channels. In January 2026, Sudanese civil society networks and humanitarian responders marked [1,000 days of war](#) with renewed calls for protection, access, and

funding, underscoring the widening gap between civilian appeals and enforceable outcomes, while 62 international rights groups [warned](#) of Sudan’s disintegration in a public statement, shedding light on the judicial system being used as a weapon. Together, these actions reflect not a shift toward humanitarian outcomes but a pattern of bottom-up civilian mobilization constrained to moral and legal appeals, underscoring the absence of enforceable civilian leverage within the conflict’s political architecture.

Domestically, SAF leadership escalated political exclusion—[publicly rejecting](#) Hamdok’s legitimacy and preventing his and other Somoud leaders’ return to the country, effectively amounting to banishment, even as it projected institutional recovery through its return to Khartoum. This juxtaposition underscored a narrowing of domestic political space at a moment when civilian actors were gaining renewed external visibility.

On February 6, 2026, the [SAF-aligned](#) Democratic Block (DB) announced plans to convene a 300-member transitional constituent assembly, mandated to legislate under the 2019 Constitutional Document and the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement (JPA). The proposed seat allocation reserves 30% for JPA signatories—largely DB members—40% for other political blocs, and 20% for the military, with remaining 10% of seats distributed among non-signatory armed movements, civil society, regional representatives, displaced populations, and traditional or religious leaders. The structure reflects an effort by DB and Joint Forces actors operating alongside the SAF to retain influence derived from JPA-era arrangements, which were originally designed to integrate armed movements into the transition and rebalance civilian political dominance following the Bashir regime’s fall.



Humanitarian Situation



1. Humanitarian access: tactical openings, structural blockage

On February 3, 2026, the Quad mechanism held a Sudan Humanitarian Fund Donor [Event](#) in Washington, D.C., at which Quad members, including the UAE, [pledged aid](#) to Sudan, while the UN sought to [rally](#) international support for humanitarian aid. STPT will reflect further on the outcomes and implications in subsequent newsletters.

Domestically, SAF-aligned authorities have continued to rhetorically emphasize cooperation with international humanitarian actors, while undermining them in practice. On January 16, 2026, the Prime Minister affirmed the government's commitment to [strengthening coordination](#) with regional and international organizations during a meeting with Doctors Without Borders (MSF), which indicated plans to expand operations nationwide—just days before new regulatory measures narrowed humanitarian operating space.

However, this rhetoric contrasts with the restrictive regulatory environment formalized ten days later. Humanitarian access remains constrained by competing bureaucratic measures imposed by both warring parties. This obstructionism escalated into a crisis in late January 2026 following a series of retaliatory directives. The RSF-affiliated National Authority for Humanitarian Aid (NAHA) issued an [ultimatum](#) requiring all international NGOs (INGOs) to register by January 31, 2026, or lose authorization to operate in RSF-held areas. In response, the Sudanese government's Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) issued a [counter-directive](#) on January 26, 2026, warning that any INGO registering with NAHA would face immediate termination of its legal accreditation in government-controlled areas. This zero-sum regulatory environment forces humanitarian actors into untenable choices and [jeopardizes](#) aid delivery by weaponizing administrative frameworks intended to facilitate access. In parallel, authorities on both sides intensified pressure on local frontline responders. Emergency Response Rooms and other community-led mechanisms faced systematic intimidation, exclusion from hospitals in Khartoum and Gezira that they had previously sustained during

peak fighting, and financial coercion, including demands that local organizations surrender portions of foreign funding as a condition for continued operations.

2. Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) under pressure

Sudan's Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) continue to **function** as critical lifelines in besieged and underserved areas, but they face **mounting** harassment, co-optation, and criminalization. ERRs are increasingly exposed—both as essential service providers and as political liabilities.

The HAC directive of January 2026 further narrows operating space by criminalizing or delegitimizing non-state coordination channels, indirectly pushing humanitarian response into informal or high-risk modalities. This deepens the paradox in which ERRs and other mutual aid initiatives are indispensable for civilian survival while simultaneously making them more vulnerable to regulatory pressures. In a move indicative of an emerging threat, the HAC deregistered two Darfuri community and women's development organizations, as well as a human rights group and a victims' solidarity organization on February 3, 2026, reportedly for registering with the RSF authorities.



Human Rights



Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [visited](#) Sudan from January 14-18, meeting authorities in Port Sudan, civil society actors, displaced communities from Darfur and Kordofan, and humanitarian partners. He also [met](#) with more than 40 civil society leaders in Dongola and held additional engagements in Northern State, marking the UN High Commissioner's first visit since November 2022.

Trend: systematic violations and normalization of mass atrocities

More than 1,000 days into the war, civilians remain its primary victims, with the conflict disproportionately harming the most vulnerable—women, children, and [marginalized and unprotected](#) populations. A severe [humanitarian crisis](#) displaced millions and disproportionately exposed women, children, and other vulnerable groups to violence, exploitation, and deprivation. The destruction of essential infrastructure has curtailed access to healthcare, education, and humanitarian aid, threatening the future of these communities and requiring immediate and sustained international attention and [action](#). The persistence of these conditions—despite intensified international attention—highlights the entrenchment of civilian harm as a structural feature of the conflict rather than a temporary byproduct, reinforcing the urgency of sustained protection and accountability measures.

1. Civilian harm in aerial operations

Drone strikes continued to cause civilian harm during January 2026. On January 12, a [strike](#) attributed to the RSF hit government and military sites in Sinja, Sennar State, killing at least 28 civilians and injuring 73, while residents of El Obeid, North Kordofan, separately [reported](#) additional drone strike incidents.

Between January 15-17, the Sudanese Lawyers Alliance documented systemic

armed attacks against unarmed civilians across multiple villages in Kordofan and [condemned](#) those attacks as grave international crimes linked to escalating clashes between SAF and RSF and its ally, the SPLM-N (al-Hilu).

SAF [drone strikes](#) across West Kordofan killed approximately 63 civilians and injured 77, including 42 killed and 47 injured in Jangaro al-Qusar, where three drone sorties on January 4 struck Lagawa locality.

Taken together, these incidents illustrate how drone attacks are being deployed in ways that cause significant civilian harm. When read alongside documented patterns of ground assaults, mass arrests, and property confiscation elsewhere in the conflict, they underscore the increasingly integrated use of coercive violence against civilian populations.

2. Darfur: starvation, displacement, and the erosion of civilian protection

Darfur's IDP and refugee camps are approaching [collapse](#), reflecting systematic violations of civilians' rights to food, water, health, and dignity amid the prolonged conflict and deliberate obstruction. [Protracted hunger](#), [malnutrition](#), [disease](#), and economic collapse—exacerbated by the destruction of livelihoods and obstruction of aid—have placed millions, particularly [women](#), [children](#), and the elderly, at risk of slow, preventable death, underscoring grave breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law and the urgent need for international protection and accountability.

The IDPs and Refugees Coordination Mechanism held all parties to the conflict fully responsible for the humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur, [calling](#) for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and an end to the systematic targeting of civilians and displacement camps. The body urged the UN, AU, EU, the Quad, and relevant states to move beyond statements of concern toward concrete action, including sustained humanitarian corridors, meaningful pressure on the parties to the conflict, and adequate emergency funding for Darfur.

3. Arbitrary detention, disappearances, and repression

The Sudanese Lawyers Alliance [confirmed](#) that between January 15 and 17, 2026, 912 people were arrested in Kordofan, particularly in Umm Qulaib and Al-Kark-ar. Multiple sources in El Obeid, North Kordofan, [reported](#) that SAF and the Joint Forces arrested between 20 and 150 civilians during raids on surrounding villages in mid-January, accusing them of collaborating with the RSF. The operations [re-reportedly](#) involved mass detentions, livestock looting, and intimidation of civilians.

Korea Prison run by RSF in Nyala, South Darfur, is holding around [600 women](#) in harsh conditions marked by prolonged detention and severe food and water

shortages, with over 50 children detained alongside their mothers; detainees—mostly aged 20–50—report forced labor imposed on juvenile inmates. On the other hand, local residents [reported](#) that on January 4, 2026, that the RSF carried out a large-scale arrest campaign in Tulus locality, 83 km south of Nyala, targeting figures linked to the former al-Bashir regime and ex-military personnel.

The Committee for Justice [documented](#) that Military Intelligence in Umm Rawaba confiscated approximately 400 civilian homes on allegations of RSF collaboration, without judicial rulings or transparent legal procedures, and [demanded](#) the immediate release of arbitrary detainees.

RSF units [repeatedly](#) intercepted and attacked civilians, particularly IDPs, attempting to flee active fighting in Kordofan often accusing them—without basis—of supporting SAF forces to justify detention and abuse. This practice obstructs safe passage, deepens the humanitarian crisis, and constitutes a clear violation of international humanitarian law protecting civilians fleeing hostilities.

4. SAF strategically embraces interational justice

The International Criminal Court’s (ICC) [sentence](#) against Ali Kushyab in December marked a significant milestone for Darfur and for international criminal justice, affirming the Court’s capacity to prosecute mass atrocities and reinforcing global commitments to accountability. In January, the decision was [welcomed](#) by human rights groups and governments. The decision carried particular weight for survivors and victims’ families, offering long-awaited recognition of their suffering and a concrete step toward ending impunity.



Relatedly, speaking at an ICC Prosecutor’s briefing to the UN Security Council in January, the SAF aligned de-facto government [urged](#) the ICC to accelerate investigations and issue arrest warrants against RSF leaders, calling for accountability not only for commanders but also for those who finance or support the RSF. By framing abuses in Darfur and Kordofan as systematic and urging ICC action against RSF leaders, the SAF authorities signaled a [tactical embrace](#) of international justice mechanisms as a tool of war and diplomatic leverage, rather than a comprehensive commitment to accountability amid the collapse of domestic judicial pathways.

Economic & War Economy Dynamics



SAF-controlled government: shrinking revenues, expanding military priorities

Nearly three years of war have hollowed out Sudan's economic foundations. As Finance Minister Gibril Ibrahim [acknowledged](#) in mid-January, the de facto government effectively lost the bulk of its revenue base following the RSF's capture of the capital and the surrounding economic heartland, which once accounted for roughly 80% of national income. Oil, agriculture, and livestock exports have sharply contracted, public debt now exceeds 220% of GDP, and even rising gold production yields offer limited fiscal relief due to extensive smuggling. Yet military spending continues to absorb a dominant share of state resources, while reconstruction needs are estimated at \$200 billion. As authorities pursue foreign partnerships—from [India](#) to traditional allies such as China, Egypt, [Turkey](#), and Saudi Arabia—structural constraints, currency depreciation, and entrenched illicit networks limit prospects for recovery. The result is a fiscally weakened state increasingly reliant on militarized priorities and externally aligned reconstruction channels, with long-term implications for sovereignty, governance, and post-war economic direction.

RSF-controlled Tasis government forms “Future Bank”: a new front in the battle for monetary control

Amid the absence of centralized fiscal authority and the expansion of extra-legal taxation networks, RSF-aligned authorities have turned to ad hoc financial mechanisms to manage liquidity and reinforce parallel governance structures. In this context, the Tasis alliance announced the establishment of “[El Mustaqbal Bank](#),” a semi-electronic platform designed to facilitate transfers and reduce reliance on cash outside the collapsed formal banking system. The initiative, however, lacks international recognition and does not function as a sovereign financial institution.

Reporting links the bank to a related digital application, “Future Money Transfer,” on

the Google Play listing, which appears to have been discontinued. The listing describes it as an “internal transfer platform” and notes that it “operates independently of the traditional banking system.” Social media posts by RSF supporters [promoted the app](#), linking it directly to the Future Bank, noting that money transfers require deposits and withdrawals in Sudanese currency. Despite these red flags, more than 10,000 individuals had downloaded the app and left average reviews when STPT last checked the [Google Play link](#) on January 20.



International & regional response



1. Quad engagement: humanitarian momentum without political leverage

The US-led Quad (United States, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt) [continued](#) to frame the conflict as not amenable to a military solution and reiterated its support for a humanitarian truce linked to a political process. However, engagement remained [stagnant](#), constrained by the escalating [rivalry](#) between the UAE and KSA in the Red Sea, with no new leverage introduced to compel compliance by either the SAF or the RSF. Nevertheless, in February 2026, Washington, D.C., hosted a Sudan Humanitarian Fund Event on February 3, in conjunction with the UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and the U.S. Senior Advisor for Arab and African Affairs. The [event](#) also addressed a tentative comprehensive peace plan that includes a humanitarian truce; the establishment of protection of civilians and the safe return of refugees and IDPs; a permanent ceasefire; a political transition to a civilian-led government; and a reconstruction fund. The STPT Executive Director [commented](#) on the proposed plan, emphasizing the role of civilian powers in humanitarian and voluntary return operations, and reiterated that the ongoing conflict in Sudan cannot be resolved militarily.

Civilian coalitions, including Somoud, [publicly endorsed](#) the Quad's roadmap and lobbied European partners to support it, but the SAF continued to [reject](#) the ceasefire proposals for not meeting its preconditions, while the RSF maintained coercive operations on the ground. As a result, Quad engagement functioned primarily as diplomatic signaling rather than as a mechanism to alter battlefield behavior or negotiation incentives. However, on February 7, 2026, adding to a wave of international condemnations of the RSF's drone strike on a WFP food convoy and civilian targets in North and South Kordofan, Saudi Arabia issued a harshly worded [statement](#) condemning the RSF's "criminal attacks" and warning against "foreign interference" by "some parties" supplying the RSF with weapons and mercenaries—an apparent reference to the UAE.

2. EU expands sanctions to seven additional individuals.

In January 2026, the EU [expanded](#) its Sudan sanctions regime by listing seven additional RSF- and SAF-affiliated individuals, formally attributing responsibility for atrocities to both sides. January 2026 does not indicate behavioral restraint by either party; instead, both appear to have adapted to external pressure while maintaining core war-economy incentives and decentralized coercive structures. As a result, the sanctions shaped tactics at the margins without materially constraining conflict dynamics or altering strategic calculations.

3. AU reaffirms principles, but fails to address key mediation challenges

At its 1319th meeting in December 2025, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) [reaffirmed](#) its longstanding positions on Sudan, including rejection of military solutions, calls for an unconditional ceasefire, and the restoration of a civilian-led government. While normatively sound, the [communiqué](#) offered no sequenced strategy, enforcement tools, or clear theory of change linking ceasefire demands to political outcomes, reinforcing the PSC's increasingly declaratory posture. The PSC welcomed the establishment of a Quintet (AU, IGAD, League of Arab States, EU, UN) in December 2025 and urged coordination with the Quad to address fragmentation. However, without clarity on how AU leadership would differ from previous failed coordination frameworks, the initiative risks reproducing rhetorical convergence rather than operational leverage. Similarly, the Council's firm rejection of RSF linked parallel governance affirms sovereignty but narrows diplomatic space by leaving unresolved how mediation can proceed while the RSF remains a central military actor.



Forward-Looking Assessment



Entrenchment, not transition

January 2026 reinforces a trajectory of consolidation rather than transition. SAF combined symbolic assertions of state authority—through leadership visits to Khartoum, service delivery signaling, and infrastructure restoration—with continued reliance on air power and allied armed groups to contest RSF control. This dual-track approach prioritizes legitimacy and international recognition over de-escalation, while leaving core conflict drivers intact.

Short and mid-term risks:

Coercive consolidation is likely to continue, with no structural improvement in humanitarian access and sustained civilian exposure to violence, displacement, and deprivation. At the mid-term risk level, war-economy dynamics are expected to become further entrenched, displacement will become increasingly irreversible, and accountability will be deferred rather than resolved.

Implications for international policy

Effective engagement will require moving beyond signaling toward measures that protect civilian and humanitarian space, disrupt armed actors' revenue and control mechanisms, and re-center civilians as political stakeholders rather than peripheral consultees.