

DOCUMENTATION CENTRALE DES CRIMES INTERNATIONAUX

SECTION AFRICA – BUREAU SUDAN

Redaction: 26/09/2025
Reference: AFSDN-NDC-1
Not protected

Context note
Location: Sudan
Period: 2023 to October 2025

Subject: Presentation of the armed group “Rapid Support Forces” (RSF)

Overview :

- **The RSF is an armed group** that was founded in 2013, created from the Janjaweed groups that supported the Sudanese government during the Darfur war. **Allied with the State’s army until 2023, they finally became adversaries** because of political disagreements over the integration of the RSF into the regular armed forces.
- The armed group **controls most of Darfur**. It is **accused of ethnic cleansing** and mass killings of civilians, particularly against the Fur, Zaghawa, Masalit and Barti communities.
- The RSF is suspected to **generate large incomes through gold exports** to the UAE. It is also known for **pillaging** villages it attacks, **impose taxes** on trade routes and **extort businesses** in its area of control.
- Investigations suggest that **the RSF receives military and logistical aid from the UAE, Libya, and Chad**. It would include weapons smuggling and **mercenary support, notably from Colombian** operatives, despite the denial of these States.
- The RSF is **led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, aka "Hemedti"**. He is backed by several of his brothers and other individuals, all accused of carrying out serious violations of international law.

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1 History and general context

The **Rapid Support Forces**, or RSF, are an **anti-governmental Sudanese armed group** founded in 2013, born from the Janjaweed militias which fought alongside Omar al-Bashir's government forces in the Darfur region¹.

The RSF **oppose the central government of Sudan** led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. They are mostly settled in Darfur². In April 2025, the RSF announced the foundation of a **parallel government** in opposition to the Sudanese central government³.

On the last week of October 2025, the **RSF seized El Fasher** after sieging the locality. They subsequently **claimed control over Darfur** and the army acknowledged a defeat. Widespread exactions were committed by the armed group, with **at least 2,000 civilians murdered in less than a week** and a mass exodus. International observers alerted on **ethnic cleansing and possible acts of genocide** against minorities from "African tribes" such as the Fur, Zaghawa, and Barti. This was reminiscent of the widespread exactions against these same groups during Al Bashir's presidency from the early 2000s until 2019⁴. *[Note: the exactions perpetrated by the RSF are covered in a separate, dedicated note.]*

The RSF have been accused of having committed **many violations of international law**, with reported killings and displacements of civilians, abductions, weaponized sexual violence and mutilations. According to the most recent estimates, the RSF has a strength of **100,000 men**⁵.

2 Objectives and geographical scope

While the former Janjawees, which became the **RSF, were allied with Sudanese government forces** during the Darfur war until the early 2020s, **the two entities have evolved into adversaries**. A key issue was the proposed integration of the RSF into the regular army led by General Al-Burhan.

The **RSF wanted a slower process to preserve its autonomy** and maintain its power acquired through the Darfuri war, while **the Sudanese armed forces pushed for rapid integration** into its control.

It eventually **led, on April 15, 2023, into a war between the State's armed forces and the RSF**. Fighting erupted in Khartoum and spread nationwide. The armed group launched attacks on strategic sites, including the presidential palace and military headquarters⁶.

The RSF mainly operates in **Darfur and Kordofan** regions, which as in 2025, the armed group control almost entirely⁷. In June 2025, the RSF took control of the Libya-Egypt-Sudan border triangle, North of El-Fasher (the capital of North Darfur) and one of the main front lines of the civil conflict.

Largely made up of **members issued from the nomadic Arabic communities** of Darfur and Kordofan, more specifically the Rizeigat, the RSF have declared as their objective the establishment of a new government, founded in April⁸.

¹ ACLED. (2024, December 12). *Conflict Watchlist 2025: Sudan - ACLED*. ACLED. <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/sudan/>

² Nashed, M. (2025, July 23). *Sudan's competing authorities are beholden to militia leaders, say analysts*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/7/23/sudans-competing-authorities-are-beholden-to-militia-leaders>

³ Dabanga Sudan. (2025, May 22). *AU's support for new Sudan PM sparks uproar among political and armed groups - Dabanga Radio TV Online*. Dabanga Radio TV Online; Radio Dabanga. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/aus-support-for-new-sudan-pm-sparks-uproar-among-political-and-armed-groups>

⁴ https://intl-crimes-doc.org/fr/weekly-international-news-review-oct-25th-31th-2025/#elementor-toc__heading-anchor-2

⁵ 1.2.1. *Major state and non-state armed groups*. (2025). European Union Agency for Asylum.

<https://euaa.europa.eu/coi/sudan/2025/security-situation/12-actors-conflict/121-major-state-and-non-state-armed-groups?utm>

⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/16/sudan-unrest-what-is-the-rapid-support-forces>

⁷ *Institute for the Study of War*. (2025). Institute for the Study of War. <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/africa-file-april-10-2025-rsf%E2%80%99s-northern-sudan-campaign>

⁸ Dabanga. (2015, September 9). *Background: Who are the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan? - Dabanga Radio TV Online*. Dabanga Radio TV Online; Radio Dabanga. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/background-who-are-the-rapid-support-forces-in-sudan?utm>

3 Financial resources

- ⊖ **Gold:** RSF has seized control of **key gold mining areas in Darfur** and other regions. Then, the metal extracted from those sites is often **smuggled via Chad and Libya toward the United Arab Emirates**, according to UN Comtrade data and the Swiss NGO Swissaid. Those sources reported that in 2024, the UAE's gold imports from Sudan surged by 70%. The UAE allegedly bought 18 tons from Chad and 9 tons from Libya, which could also be linked to the Sudanese mines that RSF controls. This would constitute a **major income for the RSF**.
- ⊖ **Looting, taxation and extortion:** RSF imposes taxes on trade routes, checkpoints, and local businesses in its areas of control. RSF is also well known for **pillaging civilians' belongings** after its numerous raids against localities. The armed group has reportedly **looted banks and government facilities** as well, **generating income and seizing valuable equipment**⁹.

4 International supports

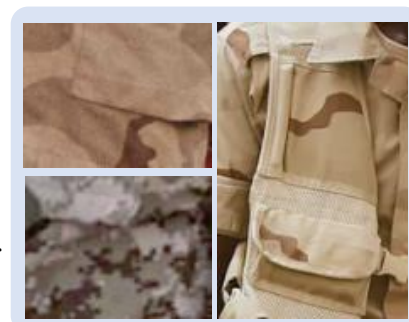
The **United Arab Emirates**, the **Eastern Libyan** government led by Kalifa Haftar and **Chad** have been accused of supporting the RSF via smuggling of weapons, logistic and operational support and military aid¹⁰. Libyan forces have been involved in fighting in Darfur and on the Libyan-Sudanese border.

In November 2025, Joint Forces troops (Darfur fighters allied with the Sudanese government) intercepted cargo made up of **Bulgarian weapons** commissioned by the International Golden Group, an **Emirate company** with ties to Leonardo and other European corporations and destined to the RSF¹¹. The weapons were smuggled by **Colombian mercenaries**, with many of them recruited by the **United Arab Emirates** to **fight alongside the RSF**¹².

5 Visual identification

*Uniforms*¹³

- ⊖ RSF members usually wear desert type military clothes. Mainly two colors are visible: **shades of beige and brown**. As 2025, some recent footages occasionally show darker, black clothing.
- ⊖ The combatants are seen **wearing tactical vests and chest rigs**, usually beige or green. It seems that the majority of them do not wear ballistic protection plates.



⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/fr/world-report/2024/country-chapters/sudan>

<https://docs.un.org/en/S/2023/644>

¹⁰ France24. (2025, March 8). *What is the UAE's involvement in war-torn Sudan?* France 24; FRANCE 24.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250308-what-is-the-uae-s-involvement-in-war-torn-sudan>

¹¹ Sironi, B. (2025, May 7). *Sudan: armi europea alle milizie RSF attraverso gli Emirati*. Nigrizia. <https://www.nigrizia.it/notizia/sudan-armi-europee-alle-milizie-rsf-attraverso-emirati-libia-inchiesta-darfur-france24>

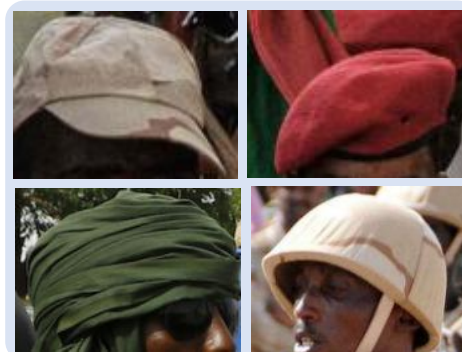
¹² Álvarez, S. R. (2024, November 26). *“Me quiero devolver”: hay más de 300 exmilitares colombianos en la guerra de Sudán*. La Silla Vacía. <https://www.lasillavacia.com/silla-nacional/me-quiero-devolver-hay-mas-de-300-exmilitares-colombianos-en-la-guerra-de-sudan/>

¹³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/7/29/rsf-attacks-compound-humanitarian-crisis-in-sudans-strategic-city> ;

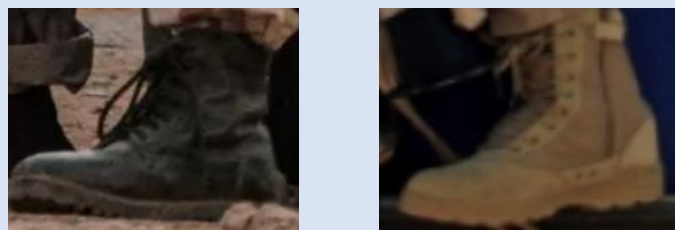
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/17/world/africa/paramilitary-rsf-explainer.html> ; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/8/sudans-rsf-closes-in-on-capturing-all-of-darfur>

<https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/regard-democracy-promotion-western-governments-credibility-currently-looks-dented>

- ⊖ Some of them wear a bright **red beret**. Others wear either a **desert camel type hat or a turban** – often green or black. Some of them, although not the majority, were observed wearing combat helmets (see below on the right).

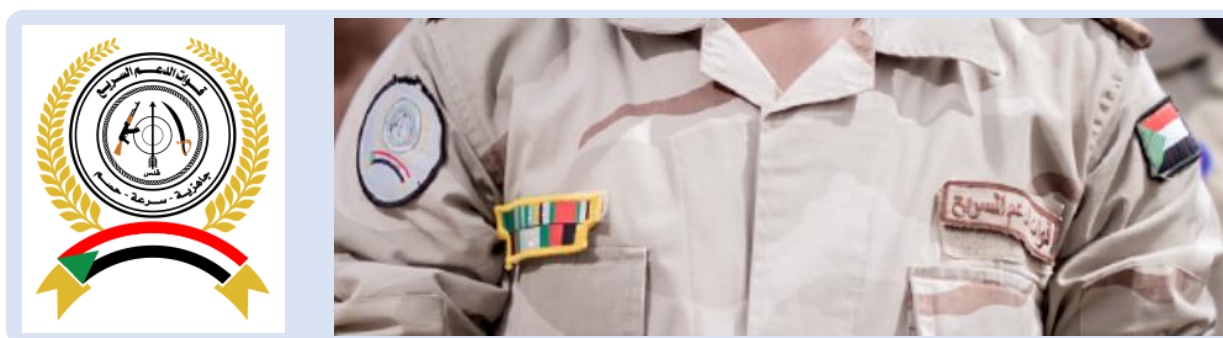


- ⊖ RSF members usually wear **black or beige military boots**.



Patches and logo¹⁴

- ⊖ The formal RSF uniforms has the **armed group logo on their right arm and the Sudanese flag on their left arm**. The RSF logo is set up in a black circle, with an AK47, an arrow and scimitar. The black circle is surrounded by gold bay leaves and the Sudanese flag at the bottom.



Armament¹⁵

RSF fighters have been observed using the following weapons:

- ⊖ **Assault rifles:**
 - Type 56 and Type 56-2 (Chinese copy of the AKM), cal 7,62x39.
 - AR 15 (mostly M16 configuration, 16- or 20-inches barrels) and derivatives; MIC Terab (Sudanese copy of the AR 15), cal 5,56x45.
 - AK 100 series, cal 5,56x45 (Mk 101 and 102), 7,62x39 (Mk 103 and 104) and 5,45x39 (Mk 105).
- ⊖ **Battle rifles:**
 - FN Herstal FAL, cal 7,62x51.
 - HK G3 and derivatives; possibly MIC Dinar (Sudanese copy of the G3), cal 7,62x51.
- ⊖ **Sniper and DMR:**
 - SVD “Dragonov” and derivatives, cal 7,62x54.

¹⁴ <https://rapidsupportforce.com/en>

¹⁵ For all information about armament, see the following links and pictures : <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2024/07/new-weapons-fuelling-the-sudan-conflict/> ; <https://www.militantwire.com/p/arsenal-of-the-rapid-support-forces> ;

⊖ **LMG, HMG & AA:**

- PKM and derivatives, cal 7,62x54.
- DSHK, cal .50 .
- ZU-23, cal 23mm .

⊖ **Shotguns:**

- Various mag-fed semi-automatic shotguns, including Hatsan SD-12, cal .12 .

⊖ **Launchers & artillery:**

- RPG-7.
- 9M133 Kornet.
- Mortars, including 82mm.

⊖ **Drones and anti-drone systems**

RSF is known to use weaponized drones, including fixed wings types, as well as drone jammer systems.

Comment: The list is representative of frequently observed gear, but may not be considered exhaustive.

Vehicles¹⁶

- ⊖ **Pick-ups trucks** – mostly Toyota – in stock, civilian configuration ; or painted in green/brown with a machinegun or an anti-aircraft ZU-23 mounted on the rear.
Some pick-ups are painted in green with red lines on both sides and a red & blue flashing light on top.
- ⊖ A limited number of **armored personal carrier** vehicles have been witnessed, in particular the model Nimr Ajban, allegedly imported in Sudan from the United Arab Emirates.



- ⊖ **Camels and horses:** RSF members are occasionally witnessed riding those animals as means of transportation.

¹⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2024/07/new-weapons-fuelling-the-sudan-conflict/> ;
<https://www.military.africa/2019/06/uae-made-nimr-ajban-440a-4x4-light-armoured-vehicle-seen-in-sudan/>
<https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-resources/exposing-rsfs-secret-financial-network/>
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/29/horrific-violations-arab-nations-slam-rsf-killings-in-sudans-el-fasher>
<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudanese-paramilitary-fighters-kill-protester>
<https://intl-crimes-doc.org/fr/weekly-international-news-review-3/>

6 Main Commanders & officials

⊖ **Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, aka “Hemedti”¹⁷ :**

Sudanese national, Hemedti has been the head of the RSF since its creation in 2013.

- Born in 1975 in Northern Darfur State. From the ethnic group Rizeigat Hilali.
- Joined the Janjaweed militia from 2003.
- Created the RSF armed group in 2013.
- Charged by the Sudanese judicial system with war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and looting.



⊖ **Abdulrahim Hamdan Dagallo¹⁸:**

- Born in 1975 in Northern Darfur State. Brother of Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, “Hemedti”.
- Deputy commander of the RSF
- Reportedly involved in commercial activities with the Junaid Group company, active in various industries including mining, transport, and infrastructure.



⊖ **Osman Mohamed Hamid Mohamed¹⁹:**

- Born in 1966 in Kadiqali, South Darfur.
- Member of the RSF since the early days of the group. Chief of the Operations Department.
- Involved in planning and executing military campaigns during which violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses have been committed.



⊖ **Algoney Hamdan Dagalo²⁰ :**

- Born August 7th 1990 in Nyala. Younger brother of Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, “Hemedti”.
- Former Hemedti’s personal secretary. Is now the RSF’s procurement director.
- Suspected of being in charge of weapons supplying to the RSF.



⊖ **Abdulrahman Juma Barkalla²¹ :**

- Born in 1969 in Al Daein - Abu Matareq, East Darfur.
- Major General of the RSF in West Darfur.
- Responsible for committing ethnically motivated killings, targeted attacks on human rights activists and defenders, conflict-related sexual violence, looting and burning of communities.
- Responsible for kidnapping and assassinating the governor of West Darfur, Khamis Abbakar.



¹⁷<https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2023/4/17/%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%82%D9%84%D9%88-%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1-%D8%A5%D8%A8%D9%84-%D9%88%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A8> ; <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-65287119>

¹⁸ <https://www.sudaninthenews.com/the-rapid-support-forces-a-comprehensive-profile> ; <https://www.africa-confidential.com/profile/id/5001/abdul-rahim-hamdan-dagalo>

¹⁹ <https://www.opensanctions.org/entities/NK-nV3rqdqTopRSifSuGS8oA9/>

²⁰ https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20241008?utm_ ; https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2635?utm_ ; <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-rsf-procurement-chief-slapped-with-us-sanctions>

²¹ <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/abdel-rahman-juma-barkalla> ; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L_202401783 ; <https://sudantribune.com/article287391/>

Appendix - Geographic landmarks

