

El-Fasher Situation Report: RSF Advances on 6th Division as Zamzam Prepares for Attack

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Yale SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Humanitarian Research Lab

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I. Key Findings

The Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) assesses that the fall of El-Fasher, North Darfur to Rapid Support Forces (RSF) may occur at any time. RSF is advancing on multiple fronts and tightening their encirclement of El-Fasher with close quarter combat against Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Joint Forces. RSF combat advances are closing in on three critical objectives from multiple directions:

1. The 6th Division Airbase;
2. The 6th Division Command in central El-Fasher near the Grand Market (Souk);
and
3. The southern axis of the B-26 Road.

At the same time, the displaced population in Zamzam IDP camp is increasing. Zamzam IDP camp appears to expect an RSF attack following the fall of El-Fasher, according to imagery analysis, open sources, and ground sources.

Fall of El-Fasher May Occur at Any Time

6th Division Airbase under threat from the west

There is likely RSF force activity within 4 km to the west of the 6th Division airbase. The west side of the airbase has sustained munitions impacts due to an attack from the western direction between 31 October and 3 November 2024.¹ Similar damage is also visible in separate north and east areas inside the base.² Regardless of whether these forces are an RSF lead force or a SAF or Joint Forces-aligned defensive force, this force presence indicates that the SAF 6th Division Airbase is under threat from a westward force.

Ongoing fighting in the center of El-Fasher in multiple directions toward the 6th Infantry Division Command

Attack from the East near Grand Market (Souk): Several structures in the Grand Market (Souk) were struck with visible damage consistent with artillery fire in satellite imagery analysis. This damage corroborates reports that RSF artillery shelling damaged the Souk on 3 November 2024.³ Further conflict-related damage to the Souk is visible in satellite imagery collected between 8-10 November 2024, consistent with clashes between RSF and SAF and Joint Forces in the area during that time period.⁴ The Grand Market is less than 1 km away from the SAF 6th Infantry Division Command, and local news outlets claim that RSF has positioned snipers in the area.⁵

Fighting from the in Northeast: Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 8 and 11 November 2024 shows a munitions impact and damage to several structures in the Tarifiya and Tijaniya neighborhoods, approximately 1.5km and 2km northeast of the 6th Infantry Division Command, respectively.

Fighting in Southeast has crossed SAF berms: Fighting has crossed two of SAF's defensive berms and, in some places, all three berms as of 23 October 2024. Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 3 and 6 November 2024 shows a munition impact and conflict-related damage to the Al-Muzdoujah Primary School for Boys in central El-Fasher and an additional munition impact on 08 November 2024. The Al-Muzdoujah

Primary School for Boys is less than 1 km away from the SAF 6th Infantry Division Command. Recent RSF-aligned propaganda videos purportedly show RSF celebrating the capture of the North Darfur Police Headquarters, located less than 1 km away from the SAF 6th Infantry Division Command. Yale HRL has not currently independently verified these videos.

B-26 South Road to Zamzam out of El-Fasher City Under Threat

Three RSF lines of attack could each threaten the exit route out of El-Fasher to Zamzam IDP camp. There are two munition impacts within 450 meters of the B-26 in the south of the city. Within 200 meters of the B26 near the Souk and Timbasi neighborhood, there is significant vehicle activity parallel to the road. There is also damage crossing to the west of the B-26 near the Souk. This bombardment and fighting in close proximity to the B-26 threatens SAF and Joint Forces control of the route to Zamzam IDP camp.

Zamzam Prepares for Attack

Significant increase in IDPs in Zamzam IDP camp as Zamzam prepares to be attacked

Significant increase in internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Zamzam camp: Analysis of satellite imagery shows a significant increase in internally displaced persons (IDP) temporary structures at a compound in Zamzam between 25 September and 23 October 2024. These findings corroborate local media reports of significant increased displacement from El-Fasher to Zamzam during this time period.⁶

Zamzam is preparing for an attack: Yale HRL observes in satellite imagery analysis the creation of defensive positions in Zamzam consistent with the expectation of an attack in the near future. Sources report that people in Zamzam are concerned about a potential attack by RSF. Yale HRL has chosen not to release satellite imagery of these locations out of credible concern for human security of the civilians in Zamzam.

Yale HRL assesses with high confidence that Zamzam IDP camp will be RSF's next target if El-Fasher falls. In the past RSF has used the proximity of IDP camps to SAF bases as cover to conduct mass atrocities including mass killings. These include the RSF massacres in Hasahisa Camp, near Zalingei (September-October 2023) and Ardamata, near El-Geneina (7 November 2023).⁷ Even if a further assault on Zamzam does not occur, famine due to RSF blockades has been already declared in Zamzam IDP camp by FEWS-NET.⁸

II. Methodology

Yale HRL utilizes data fusion methodologies of open source and remote sensing data analysis. Yale HRL produced this report through the cross-corroboration of open source data, including social media, local news reporting, multimedia, and other reports, and remote sensing data, including satellite imagery and thermal sensor data.

Researchers analyzed open source data across social media, news reports, and other publicly available sources to identify, chrono- and geolocate, and verify incidents. Analysts assess the credibility and reliability of open source data based on a source's level of detail, past credibility, and the corroboration of other independent sources. Remote sensing and satellite imagery analysis relies on multi-temporal change detection, which involves the comparison of two or more satellite images of the same area captured at different times to detect differences in coloration, visual properties, and presence, absence, or positional change of objects across the images.

Place names were identified using UN P-codes obtained via the United Nations Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) and International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan. This baseline was then verified and informed through open source analysis by Yale HRL's analysts with relevant cultural and linguistic skills.

Limitations

There are significant limitations to the data fusion methodology. The information environment in Sudan does not have the breadth of data available in other locations and there is likely a significant reporting bias for those who provide open source reporting. The tools and techniques present significant challenges to assess activities such as extrajudicial detention, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and conflict-related casualties, particularly in environments with limited data. Satellite imagery analysis is limited by available imagery over time and space. Available nadir angles of satellite imagery can produce challenges to assess structural damage, until multiple angles and ground-level photographic and video materials emerge to help inform the analysis. Image resolution level can also limit the analyst's ability to perceive the full extent of damage present.

¹ Caitlin N. Howarth, Kaveh Khoshnood, Nathaniel A. Raymond et al. "Special Report: Human Security Alert RSF Encirclement of 6th Infantry Division in El-Fasher, North Darfur." 05 November 2024. Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven.

² Caitlin N. Howarth, Kaveh Khoshnood, Nathaniel A. Raymond et al. "Special Report: Human Security Alert RSF Encirclement of 6th Infantry Division in El-Fasher, North Darfur." 05 November 2024. Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven.

³ Darfur24, "المستشفى العسكري بـ"الفاشر" على شفا الانهيار" November 4, 2024, <https://www.darfur24.com/2024/11/04/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%81%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D9%80%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%B4%D9%81%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/T7Q9-BKAX>

⁴ Darfur24, "مقتل 11 مدنيًا في أحدث قصف للدعم السريع على سوق المواشي بالفاشر" November 10, 2024, <https://www.darfur24.com/2024/11/10/%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-11-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%8B%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB-%D9%82%D8%B5%D9%81-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%B9/>,

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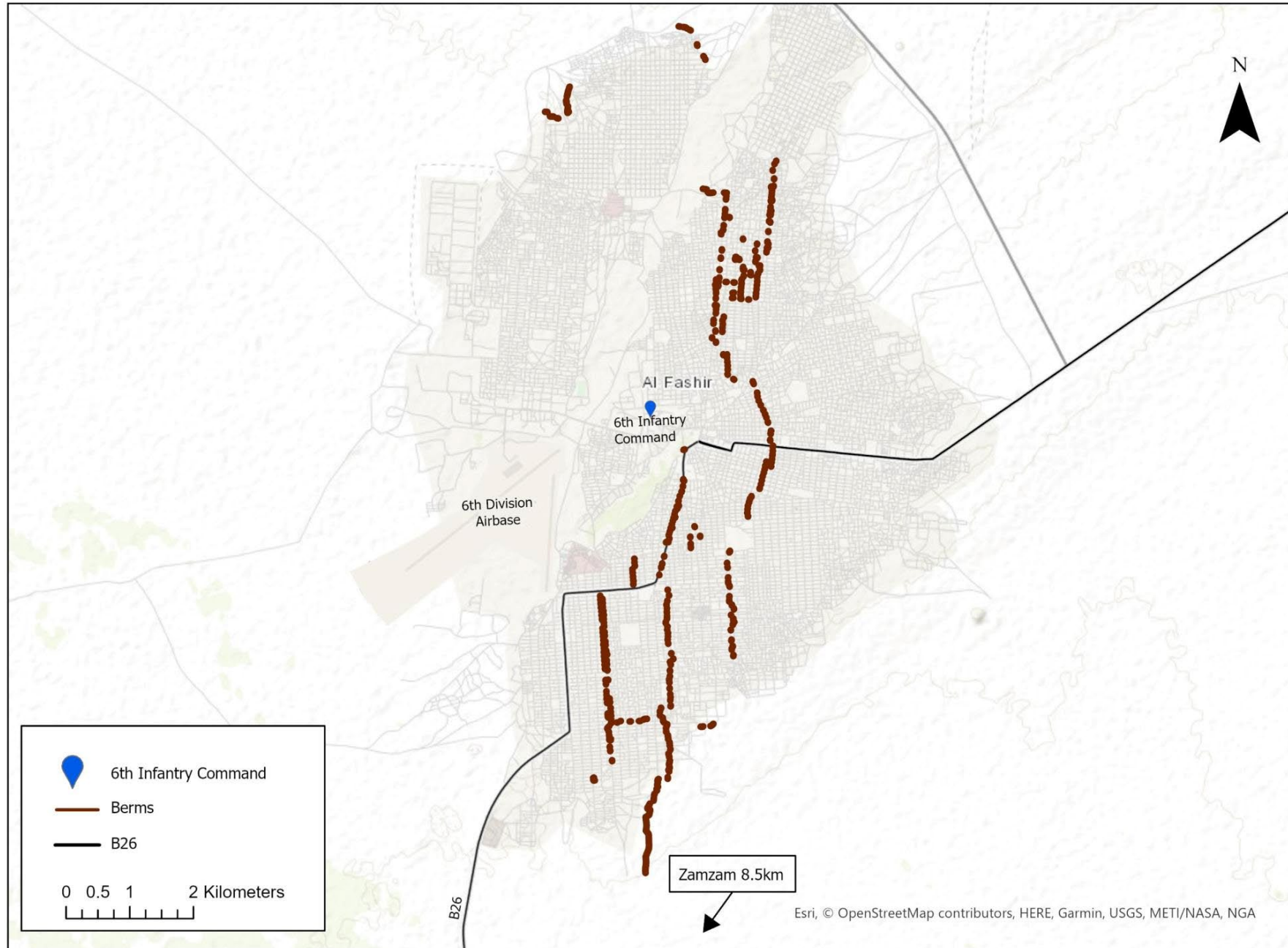
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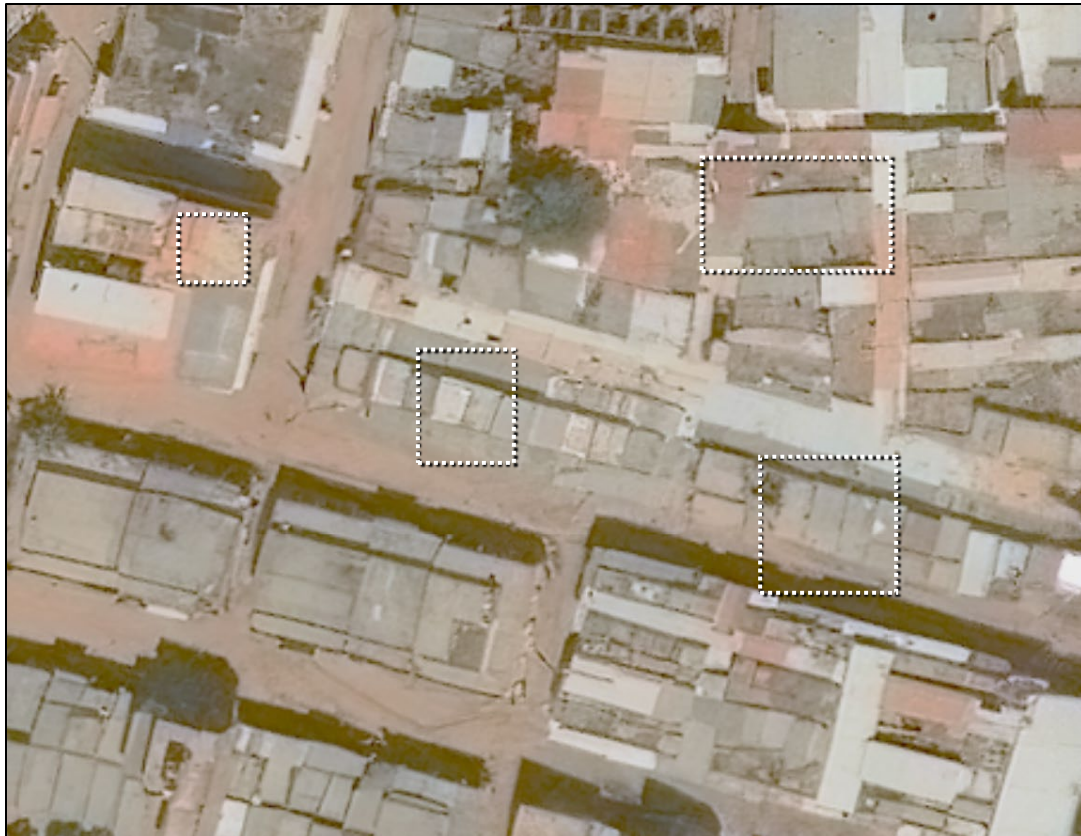
El-Fasher, North Darfur



Grand Market, El-Fasher

CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED
03-06 NOVEMBER 2024

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 03 and 06 November 2024 shows damage from artillery shelling to several structures in the Grand Market in El-Fasher.



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Grand Market, El-Fasher

**CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED
08-10 NOVEMBER 2024**

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 08 and 10 November 2024 shows conflict-related damage to structures at the Grand Market, El-Fasher.

This site is approximately 1 km away from the Sixth Infantry Command Base and about 0.3 km away from the B-26.



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Al-Jil neighborhood, Central El-Fasher

**CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED
06-08 NOVEMBER 2024**



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Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 06 and 08 November 2024 shows damage from ground attacks to central El-Fasher.

This site is approximately 1.5 km away from the Sixth Infantry Command Base and about 0.1 km away from the B-26.



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Tarifiya Neighborhood, Central El-Fasher

MUNITION IMPACT AND CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED 08-10 NOVEMBER 2024



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Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 08 and 10 November 2024 shows a munition impact and damage to several structures in central El-Fasher.

This site is approximately 1.5 km away from Sixth Infantry Command Base and about 0.5 km away from the B-26.



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Tijaniya neighborhood, Central El-Fasher

MUNITION IMPACT AND CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED 08-11 NOVEMBER 2024



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Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 08 and 11 November 2024 shows a munitions impact and damage to several structures in the Tijaniya neighborhood of El-Fasher.

This site is approximately 2 km away from Sixth Infantry Command Base and about 1.1 km away from the B-26.



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Al-Muzdoujah Primary School for Boys, Central El-Fasher

CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE AND MUNITIONS IMPACT OBSERVED 03-08 NOVEMBER 2024

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 03 and 06 November 2024 shows munition impacts and conflict-related damage to buildings in a compound in central El-Fasher.

Imagery collected on 08 November 2024, shows the presence of munition impacts at the compound.

This site is approximately 1.5 km away from the Sixth Infantry Command Base and about 0.05 km away from the B-26.



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08 November 2024 © 2024 Maxar Technologies

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Mosque, El-Fasher

MUNITION IMPACT AND CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED 08-10 NOVEMBER 2024



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Image enhanced by Maxar MGP Pro HD Enhancement

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 08 and 10 November 2024 shows a munition impact consistent with that from aerial bombardment and damage to several structures to a mosque complex in central El-Fasher.

This site is approximately 2.1 km away from the Sixth Infantry Command Base and about 0.6 km away from the B-26.



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Southern El-Fasher

CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED 08-10 NOVEMBER 2024

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 08 and 10 November 2024 shows conflict-related damage to several structures from ground-based attacks in southern El-Fasher.

The lack of damage to surrounded collective of structures indicate the location was targeted.



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Southern El-Fasher

**CONFLICT-RELATED DAMAGE OBSERVED
08-10 NOVEMBER 2024**



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Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 08 and 10 November 2024 shows conflict-related damage to several structures from ground-based attacks in southern El-Fasher.

The lack of damage to surrounding structures indicate the location was targeted.

This site is approximately 6.2 km away from Sixth Infantry Command Base and about 2 km away from the B-26.



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Zamzam IDP Camp

NEW IDP PRESENCE BETWEEN 25
SEPTEMBER-23 OCTOBER 2024

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 25 September and 23 October 2024 shows a significant increase of IDP temporary structures at a compound in Zamzam IDP Camp.



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23 October 2024 © 2024 Maxar, USG-Plus