

SUDAN Conflict Observatory

CRITICALLY DETERIORATING HUMAN SECURITY AND
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION ACROSS NYALA

REPORT 010 | 31 AUGUST 2023

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This report was produced as part of the Sudan Conflict Observatory with the support of the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, United States Department of State. This report does not represent the views of the United States Government. Learn more at [Sudan.ConflictObservatory.org](https://sudan.conflictobservatory.org).

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CITATION | Howarth, Caitlin N., Kaveh Khoshnood, Andrew Marx, Nathaniel A. Raymond, et al. "CRITICALLY DETERIORATING HUMAN SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN SITUATION ACROSS NYALA" Report 010. 31 August 2023, Sudan Conflict Observatory: Washington, DC. Available at <https://sudan.conflictobservatory.org>.

methodology

The Yale Humanitarian Research Lab's data fusion methodologies combine remote sensing analysis with open-source data to assess and geolocate events. Yale HRL uses remote sensing data including moderate and very high resolution (VHR) satellite imagery, NASA thermal detection data, as well as open-source social media, local news reporting, multimedia, and other verified reports. When necessary, sources are redacted for protection purposes; a redacted source list is available to authorized users.

The conflict in Sudan is marked by a lack of data generally. This includes limited remote sensing data including moderate and VHR satellite imagery and open-source data, including social media. The lack of open-source multimedia may be attributed partially to the widespread power and telecommunications blackouts across the region. This means that (a) many events are unreported or under-reported, and (b) where reports of events exist there may not be sufficient data at this time to corroborate or assess alleged events.

KEY FINDINGS

- Yale HRL can confirm humanitarian reports of armed forces operating within civilian neighborhoods in Nyala. RSF and SAF are assessed to be clashing in very close proximity to one another, with visible damage to civilian dwellings observed in satellite imagery. It is probable that fighting in an urban environment will become protracted.
- Nyala is home to close to 500,000 IDPs who are vulnerable due to conflict. At least as many as 50,000 people have left Nyala since 11 August 2023, and at least 120,000 people are reported to have arrived in East Darfur, likely as a direct result of clashes in Nyala.
- The Turkish hospital in Nyala reportedly remains the only hospital that is still in service across the city. Humanitarian aid has been unable to reach the city with medical and health supplies reported to be critically low as of 21 August 2023.
- Nyala is 195 km away from El-Fasher. Fighting in Nyala and control of the road linking the two cities will determine the human security conditions at El-Fasher, regardless of the battle's outcome.

CURRENT SITUATION

Nyala

Security situation in Nyala

The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and aligned forces have increased the intensity of fighting across civilian neighborhoods surrounding SAF's 16th Infantry division base. Heavy fighting erupted between 10 to 28 August 2023 and at least 60 people have been reportedly killed and 250 injured.ⁱ Widespread reports of indiscriminate fighting have killed civilians and jeopardizes the safety and livelihood of civilian populations, including through damages to infrastructure.ⁱⁱ Nyala has been the epicenter of intermittent fighting in South Darfur since the beginning of the conflict but this is the worst violence in Nyala since RSF began an assault on the north part of the city in mid-July.

On 22 August 2023 alone, 27 people were reportedly killed due to clashes in the city.ⁱⁱⁱ Radio Dabanga reports indiscriminate shelling by both the RSF, paramilitary forces and SAF during this time of reporting.^{iv} On 21 August 2023, the Commander of the 16th Infantry Division, Yasser Fadlallah, was reportedly assassinated by a member of the 16th infantry according to multiple sources.^v The current fighting has displaced civilians and left them sheltering in

place^{vi} MSF reported on 24 August 2023 that civilians were trapped in the city, with armed combatants (which another report identified as RSF) infiltrating civilian occupied neighborhoods and homes, leaving few areas protected for civilians.^{vii}

Between 2 and 9 August 2023, there have been several reports of RSF and aligned forces abducting perceived political opponents as well as women and children.^{viii} Human rights activist and lawyer Ahmed Muhammed Abdullah was found dead on 4 August 2023, a day after allegedly being abducted by RSF aligned gunman.^{ix}

- i. <https://twitter.com/alnourradio/status/1689737518399270912>, archived at <https://perma.cc/7PWY-5KK8> ; <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2023/08/14/Fighting-rages-in-Sudan-s-Nyala->, archived at <https://perma.cc/CS9S-GSHG> ; <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/recent-clashes-cause-deaths-and-injuries-in-south-darfur-and-more-displacement-in-north-darfur>, archived at <https://perma.cc/C5DA-JX2S> ; <https://press.un.org/en/2023/db230823.doc.htm>, archived at <https://perma.cc/4LUX-PRDS>
- ii. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/dozens-possibly-dead-in-south-darfur-clashes>, archived at <https://perma.cc/HJ6N-A95C> ; SITREP_02_001; SITREP_02_002; SITREP_02_003; SITREP_02_004
- iii. <https://twitter.com/AlHadath/status/1694106169822900646>, archived at <https://perma.cc/B44N-U3Y9>
- iv. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/dozens-possibly-dead-in-south-darfur-clashes>, archived at <https://perma.cc/HJ6N-A95C>
- v. <https://twitter.com/AlHadath/status/1693609690620420239?s=20>, archived at <https://perma.cc/ADQ3-6F3J> ; <https://www.sudanakhbar.com/1420177>, archived at <https://perma.cc/9WTN-FEJA>

- vi. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/civilians-cower-as-shelling-pounds-south-darfur-capital>, archived at <https://perma.cc/A58Q-BXQC>
- vii. https://twitter.com/MSF_uk/status/1694728740214054963, archived at <https://perma.cc/J48Z-E2MC>; <https://darfurunionuk.wordpress.com/2023/08/22/1030-30/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/XX89-83HS>
- viii. <https://www.sudanakhbar.com/1413839> archived at <https://perma.cc/RX4U-AQF3> ; <https://sudantribune.com/article275775/> archived at <https://perma.cc/N63Y-JF44>
- ix. <https://sudantribune.com/article275775/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/N63Y-JF44>

CURRENT SITUATION

Nyala

Between abductions, shelling, and clashes, Nyala's security situation has become untenable and dangerous for those still living in the city.

On 27 August 2023, Sudan Tribune reported that the Joint Forces mediation has led to a temporary ceasefire between RSF and SAF.^x The Joint Forces announced they arrived in Nyala and were deployed across markets in the city to offer protection.^{xi}

State of the Internally Displaced People (IDP) in Nyala

The security situation puts at risk the large displaced populations that have been present in Nyala. There are hundreds of thousands of displaced people spread around Nyala that are especially vulnerable to the ongoing fighting. Nyala is home to several large IDP camps, most notably Kalma, Otash, and Dereige camps on the east-northeast outskirts and Al Serief west of the city. Based on the latest available information publicly provided by humanitarian agencies, it is estimated that there at least 500,000 IDPs in the camps that border Nyala as of December 2022. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported in December 2022 that the following camps in and around Nyala were home to at least^{xii}:

- Otash, 176,000 people
- Dereige, 141,000 people
- Kalma, 153,000 people
- Al Serief, 45,000 people

Nyala is situated 195 kilometers south of El-Fasher, another city with a large amount of at-risk IDPs, with a direct route connecting the two cities. ZamZam refugee camp, is located along that route, 14 km south of El-Fasher. Zamzam is particularly vulnerable due to its separation from El-Fasher and hosts reportedly at least 450,000 IDPs.^{xiii}

x. <https://sudantribune.net/article276560/> archived at <https://perma.cc/84ZL-TYUX>

xi. <https://twitter.com/RadioDabanga/status/1696074454277697678> archived at <https://perma.cc/9KLN-NL6E>; https://twitter.com/SudanTribune_AR/status/1696153446229971025, archived at <https://perma.cc/7Y36-PF7T> <https://twitter.com/ArkoMinawi/status/1695847776498614343>, archived at <https://perma.cc/J8Q3-ULZ8>

xii. <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/sudan-displacement-data-idps-iom-dtm>, archived at <https://perma.cc/F9F9-V7D4>

xiii. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/zamzam-camp-profile-al-fasher-north-darfur-state-sudan-october-2022>, archived at <https://perma.cc/98MV-567G>

CURRENT SITUATION

Nyala

Clashes in Nyala create a dire humanitarian crisis

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Nyala is of great concern. Prior to the 10 August 2023 escalation, Darfur²⁴ reported at least 200 people were killed in Nyala and thousands wounded.^{xiv} As clashes in Nyala intensify, the security of the civilian population is further endangered. The Turkish Hospital is the only hospital in service with severely limited capability to provide care. The current state of the hospital will likely negatively impact the short and long-term survivability of wounded civilians.^{xv} Medical supplies have been extremely limited, with blood transfusions, gauze, numerous medicines, solutions and sutures all cited as critically low.^{xvi} There have been reports that supplies in Nyala have been low since before the conflict even started in April, and the situation has been worsening as a result of the ongoing conflict.^{xvii} Continued telecommunications blackout and lack of internet connectivity also contribute to the hospital's reduced ability to function effectively.^{xviii} These blackouts also reduce the ability for civilians to communicate about their status on the ground, limiting sources of information about the fighting beyond remote sensing data. Civilians still in the proximity of Nyala are forced in a position with little communication, supplies, medical care or safety. For those who manage to flee, to El-Fasher or otherwise, they face numerous other safety and supply obstacles to reach their destination safely.

Aid relief to Nyala is much needed, but there is no guarantee of its imminent arrival. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that the clashes are hampering the delivery of supplies and aid as UN Humanitarian convoys are slow to reach the city.^{xix} The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have reportedly sent trucks with supplies on 3 and 9 August 2023. These supply trucks have allegedly not yet reached the city as of 28 August 2023.^{xx} Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) and other aid supplies from UNICEF, intended to arrive in Nyala, remain stationed at El Daein Town since 14 August 2023.^{xxi}

The renewed fighting and dire humanitarian situation in Nyala have raised local and international calls of concern. Darfur Governor, Minni Minawi, stressed the need for expedited aid delivery to Nyala.^{xxii} The US Department of State has called on the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces to cease hostilities in Nyala.^{xxiii} Every day this fighting continues, the civilian casualties should be expected to grow and the humanitarian situation should be expected to worsen.

- xiv. <https://www.darfur24.com/en/2023/07/22/scores-killed-injured-in-nyala-as-clashes-intensifies-between-army-and-rsf/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/25GH-UHKA>
- xv. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/recent-dashes-cause-deaths-and-injuries-in-south-darfur-and-more-displacement-in-north-darfur> archived at <https://perma.cc/KR49-F4DJ>
- xvi. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/doctors-south-darfur-running-short-of-med-supplies>, archived at <https://perma.cc/8LW8-AY58>
- xvii. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/west-darfur-clashes-leave-25-dead-prisoners-freed-in-nyala-and-el-fasher>, archived at <https://perma.cc/57EL-TLOH>; <https://twitter.com/MSF/status/1648591496206077953>, archived at <https://perma.cc/X5EV-LY9F>
- xviii. <https://www.darfur24.com/en/2023/08/15/17-media-institutions-issue-statement-on-the-status-of-sudanese-journalists/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/PR2F-7GC8>; <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/continued-battles-deepen-civilian-suffering-in-north-and-south-darfur>, archived at <https://perma.cc/QVR8-JUYG>

- xix. <https://www.unocha.org/news/to-days-top-news-ukraine-sudan-niger#:~:text=We%20are%20deeply%20concerned%20by,the%20International%20Organization%20for%20Migration.,> archived at <https://perma.cc/UV2D-R2BT>
- xx. https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-update-14-august-2023?_gl=1*cfuy1b*_ga*ODg3MzA3MTA2LjE2NzUwNTg5NTQ.*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTY5MjA4NzYwNi4xNTIuMS4xNjkyMDg3NjA4LjU4LjAuMA.., archived at <https://perma.cc/M8JU-XJEM>
- xxi. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/flash-update/6pAVMP3Q8Fckx2PGKNkZA1/> archived at <https://perma.cc/J8Q4-35G3>
- xxii. <https://twitter.com/TaybaSD/status/1693367302828294217> archived at <https://perma.cc/V24D-3EV5>
- xxiii. <https://www.state.gov/on-fighting-in-nyala-in-south-darfur-sudan/> archived at <https://perma.cc/4AV8-NTWS>

CURRENT SITUATION

South Darfur

Displacement from conflict and violence (South Darfur)

South Darfur has seen widespread displacement of its civilians since the conflict began, with many staying around the State in camps and in host communities. On 22 August 2023, IOM reported at least 232,085 newly displaced people in South Darfur since 15 April 2023.^{xxiv} With the human security situation worsening in Nyala, local news media report on 15 August 2023 at least 5,000 civilians have fled Nyala to El-Fasher and 12,000 families fled Nyala to North Darfur since 11 August 2023.^{xxv} The 21 August 2023 UNOCHA reporting details that approximately 50,000 people, since 11 August 2023, have fled Nyala due to the ongoing fighting between the SAF and RSF.^{xxvi}

Unlike El-Geneina and the surrounding areas, the majority of civilians in South Darfur cannot reach an adjoining border to seek safety in another country. As a result, thousands have fled to the interior, often to urban areas.

Virtually all of the displaced are from within the state, with over 99.9% of IDPs emanating from Nyala, Mershing, and Kas.^{xxvii} Out of the over 3.6 total million displaced by the conflict in Sudan, the 7.1% of IDPs are from South Darfur State which is the third largest population displaced by state after Khartoum and North Darfur.^{xxviii}

Recent clashes in Nyala have led to an increase in IDPs across the state. The fighting in Nyala has led to thousands of people fleeing, leaving them vulnerable as they travel, while others remained trapped due to financial and safety concerns. Alongside fleeing to El-Fasher and other neighborhoods within Nyala city, civilians have also arrived in Tulus, Buram, As Salam and Damso localities in South Darfur and to Shia'ria locality and El Daein Town in East Darfur.^{xxix} El Daein is also receiving a large influx of displaced people from Nyala.^{xxx} On 22 August 2023, IOM noted that more than 120,000 additional displaced people had arrived in East Darfur over the course of the past week.^{xxxi} Based on this data, HRL assesses that these displaced people were likely fleeing from the violence in Nyala.

xxiv. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-17?close=true>, archived at <https://perma.cc/DS35-TJUQ>

xxv. <https://www.darfur24.com/2023/08/15/%d9%81%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a2%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%81-%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%89-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%81%d8%a7%d8%b4%d8%b1-%d8%ac%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d9%85%d8%b9/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/7WX4-EWSJ>

xxvi. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/flash-update/6pAVMP3O8Fckx2PGKNkZA1/> archived at <https://perma.cc/J8Q4-35G3>

xxvii. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-17?close=true>, archived at <https://perma.cc/DS35-TJUQ>

xxviii. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-17?close=true>, archived at <https://perma.cc/DS35-TJUQ>

xxix. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/flash-update/6pAVMP3O8Fckx2PGKNkZA1/> archived at <https://perma.cc/J8Q4-35G3>

xxx. <https://twitter.com/3ngraibNews/status/1693863554762354912> archived at <https://perma.cc/3W35-QP7U>

xxxi. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-18?close=true>, archived at <https://perma.cc/R9L3-MXMX>

CURRENT SITUATION

South Darfur

Increase numbers of IDPs increases humanitarian needs and places further strains on host cities. There is a critical need for significant and imminent delivery of life-saving aid to support these growing needs. Reports are emerging that some civilians are struggling to flee due to the severely inflated prices of transportation costs.^{xxxii} There are reports that travel in buses from Nyala to El-Fasher now costs 10x normal pre-conflict prices.^{xxxiii} Numbers of civilians fleeing to El-Fasher and El Daein are expected to continue to grow daily as people continue to flee by foot and are travelling over 100km to reach safer areas.^{xxxiv} Displaced civilians, attempting to seek safety, are also highly susceptible to the impact of the developing rainy season, currently covering the majority of Darfur, and will continue to face difficult and unsanitary conditions as they travel by foot.

xxxii. SITREP_02_005

xxxiii. SITREP_02_005

xxxiv. <https://sudantribune.net/article276373/> archived at <https://perma.cc/K7GH-BNCX> <https://www.darfur24.com/2023/08/21/%d9%86%d8%b2%d9%88%d8%ad-83-%d8%a3%d9%84%d9%81-%d8%a3%d8%b3%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%89-%d8%b4%d8%b1%d9%82-%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%81%d9%88%d8%b1/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/LH4P-L6XF>

CURRENT SITUATION

El Fasher

Unstable peace in El-Fasher

Thousands of civilians have reportedly been displaced from Nyala 195 kilometers north to El-Fasher. El-Fasher is the capital city of North Darfur, host to 500,000 IDPs. While it is the potential last safe haven for people displaced from Nyala, El-Fasher itself is at risk of violence erupting similar to what Nyala is currently experiencing. El-Fasher appears to be under multiple zones of control between RSF and SAF with SAF controlling the southern part of the city, and RSF positioned in the northern part of the city.^{xxxv} This would indicate that RSF is operating in the vicinity of IDP camps, potentially endangering the lives of vulnerable civilians living in those settlements.

Intermittent clashes since 17 August 2023 place the city on high alert, with tensions running high, amidst a period of relative peace.^{xxxvi} On 17 August 2023, open sources reported indiscriminate shelling in the vicinity of Abu Shouk IDP camp.^{xxxvii} On 18 August 2023, RSF and SLM El Foka's indiscriminate shelling resulted in civilian casualties.^{xxxviii} SLM El Foka is a split-off faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement, to which approximately 1500 fighters defected under the leadership of El Sadig Abdelkarim.^{xxxix}

State of the Internally Displaced People (IDP) in El Fasher

El-Fasher houses several large Internal Displaced People (IDP) camps, most notably, Abu Shouk, Al Salam, Zamzam, and Korma camps in the vicinity of the El-Fasher city. As of December 2022, IOM reported that the camps around El-Fasher were home to at least 550,000 people across^{xl}:

- Abu Shouk, 75,000 people, approximately 2.5 km north-west of El-Fasher town;
- Al Salam, 84,000 people, approximately 5km north of El-Fasher town;
- Zamzam, between 300,000 – 400,000 people, approximately 14 km south of El-Fasher town^{xli}; and
- Korma, 13,700 people.

xxxv. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/recent-dashes-cause-deaths-and-injuries-in-south-darfur-and-more-displacement-in-north-darfur>, archived at <https://perma.cc/SQ86-ADRY>

xxxvi. https://www.facebook.com/darfur24/posts/777038931097218?ref=embed_post, archived at <https://perma.cc/37PM-JNFK>

xxxvii. SITREP_02_006

xxxviii. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/recent-clashes-cause-deaths-and-injuries-in-south-darfur-and-more-displacement-in-north-darfur>, archived at <https://perma.cc/SQ86-ADRY>

xxxix. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/recent-dashes-cause-deaths-and-injuries-in-south-darfur-and-more-displacement-in-north-darfur>, archived at <https://perma.cc/V5BY-JRE9>

xl. <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/sudan-displacement-data-idps-iom-dtm>, archived at <https://perma.cc/F9F9-V7D4>

xli. <https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Flash-Report-ZZ.pdf>, archived at <https://perma.cc/E7ML-6USP>

CURRENT SITUATION

El Fasher

Nonviolent Peaceforce, an organization whose mission is to protect civilians in violent conflicts through unarmed strategies, reported that an Early Warning/Early Response (EWER) Committee was formed at Zamzam to respond to security concerns and enhance protection response capabilities.^{xlii} The establishment of an early warning committee reflects the growing concern among IDPs that the deteriorating security situation will soon affect them and may indicate that they fear no one will protect them.

Severe storms during the rainy season also jeopardize El-Fasher and surrounding IDP camps. There were particularly heavy rains on 4 and 5 August 2023 which partially or totally destroyed at least 1,414 houses and 830 latrines^{xliii} and affected at least 10,000 people in Zamzam and Al Salam IDP camps.^{xliv} These conditions expose IDPs to critical protection and health risks with reports of open defecation and high rates of diarrhea among IDPs.^{xlv} The chance of cholera also significantly in these conditions at this time of the year – the high of the rainy season.

xlii. <https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Flash-Report-ZZ.pdf>, archived at <https://perma.cc/E7ML-6USP> ; <https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/our-mission/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/2KNH-52ZA>

xliii. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/regional-sudan-response-situation-update-15-august-2023>, archived at <https://perma.cc/4VSM-C52H>

xliv. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/card/4FckXGGIT1/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/TE2J-HD2N>

xlv. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/card/4FckXGGIT1/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/TE2J-HD2N>

CURRENT SITUATION

North Darfur

Displacement from conflict and violence (North Darfur)

On 22 August 2023, IOM reported at least 276,105 newly displaced people in North Darfur.^{xlvi} The reduction in the IDP population in North Darfur since July is attributed to the movement of IDPs moving from Tawila towards both El-Fasher in North Darfur and Jabal Marra in Central Darfur. IDPs are sheltering across El-Fasher, Al Koma, Al Lait, Al Malha, As Serief, At Tawisha, Dar As Salam, Kebkabiya, Kernoï, Kutum, Melit, Saraf Omra, Tawila, Um Baru, and Um Kadadah localities in North Darfur.^{xlvi}

xlvi. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-18>, archived at <https://perma.cc/C3NM-CXLE>

xlvi. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/glance-protection-impact-conflict-update-no-14-20-august-2023#:~:text=In%20North%20Darfur%2C%20an%20estimated,Jabal%20Marra%20in%20Central%20Darfur>, archived at <https://perma.cc/6B73-DKYY>

NYALA Market

DAMAGE TO MARKET BUILDINGS

Munition impact at civilian market in central Nyala. The damage to the market is assessed to have occurred between 19 August and 22 August 2023, according to imagery analysis.



19 August 2023 © 2023 Planet Labs



24 Aug 2023 © 2023 Maxar

Mecca Mosque

DAMAGE TO FACILITY NEAR MOSQUE

Munition impact at the roof of a building attached to the Mecca Mosque. The damage is assessed to have occurred between 16 July and 19 August 2023, according to imagery analysis.



16 July 2023 © 2023 Planet Labs



22 Aug 2023 © 2023 Planet Labs

Military Hospital

DAMAGE TO MILITARY HOSPITAL

Military Hospital in Nyala is assessed to have been struck by munitions between 19 August and 22 August 2023, according to imagery analysis.



19 August 2023 © 2023 Planet Labs



22 Aug 2023 © 2023 Planet Labs

Kober Prison, Nyala

DAMAGE TO KOBER PRISON

Munition impact at the Kober Prison in Nyala. The Activity is assessed to have occurred between 17 July and 19 August 2023, according to imagery analysis.



17 July 2023 © 2023 Maxar



22 Aug 2023 © 2023 Planet Labs

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