

Strategic SAF Installation on Nyala – El-Fasher Road Vacated

Zamzam IDP Camp Now Unprotected

22 April 2024

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) finds with high confidence that a former Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) outpost at Menawashi, South Darfur is likely vacated and no longer under SAF control following fighting during the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024. This Menawashi outpost is located along the A43 road approximately 80 km north of Nyala, South Darfur and 116 km south of El-Fasher, North Darfur. As a result, Yale HRL assesses that this A43 southern road from El-Fasher to Nyala is not under the control of SAF. Yale HRL assesses with high confidence that this SAF outpost in Menawashi had been of critical strategic importance to preventing a Rapid Support Forces (RSF) incursion from the south towards the Zamzam Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp and El-Fasher city proper. Zamzam IDP camp—the single largest IDP camp in Darfur—is located approximately 10 km south of El-Fasher city on the A43 road to Nyala.ⁱ This Menawashi outpost may have served as an ambient protective force for the Zamzam IDP camp. This leaves any potential RSF approach from the direction of Nyala to El-Fasher largely undefended based on data available to Yale HRL as of publication. Because this was a combat engagement between both sides, Yale HRL assesses that this information can be released without human security concerns as both parties are assessed to be aware of Menawashi's status.

Yale HRL is releasing this information publicly specifically because of its value in demonstrating the urgency of the unfolding situation in and around El-Fasher.

The known SAF position outside Menawashi was damaged by fighting likely by early December 2023. The exact date and time of this combat engagement cannot be determined at present, but based on imagery analysis, it likely occurred between 31 May and early December 2023. Past imagery analysis by Yale HRL in the summer of 2023 found that SAF had built up defensive positions and reinforced the entry control point since around at least the start of the conflict in 2023 until August 2023, and positioned a significant complement of mechanized infantry at this Menawashi location. Since the fall of 2023 there has been visible damage to the Menawashi SAF outpost including destroyed buildings and probable ground scarring. The visual indicators of damage at the outpost in Menawashi are consistent with a combat engagement having occurred, most likely between SAF and RSF and aligned forces. Yale HRL assesses based on satellite imagery from 20 April that there are no vehicles present, indicating at most a minimal possible military presence. It is likely that SAF no longer maintains a presence at the Menawashi outpost and it is unlikely that another military force has established a significant presence at the Menawashi outpost as of 20 April 2024.

II. Human Security Analysis

Yale HRL assesses that the Menawashi outpost has been a strategic position for SAF during and after RSF captured Nyala in 2023. This outpost may have served as a defensive installation to detect, prevent, and slow RSF's approach from Nyala to El-Fasher. This assessment that SAF no longer controls this key point between Nyala and

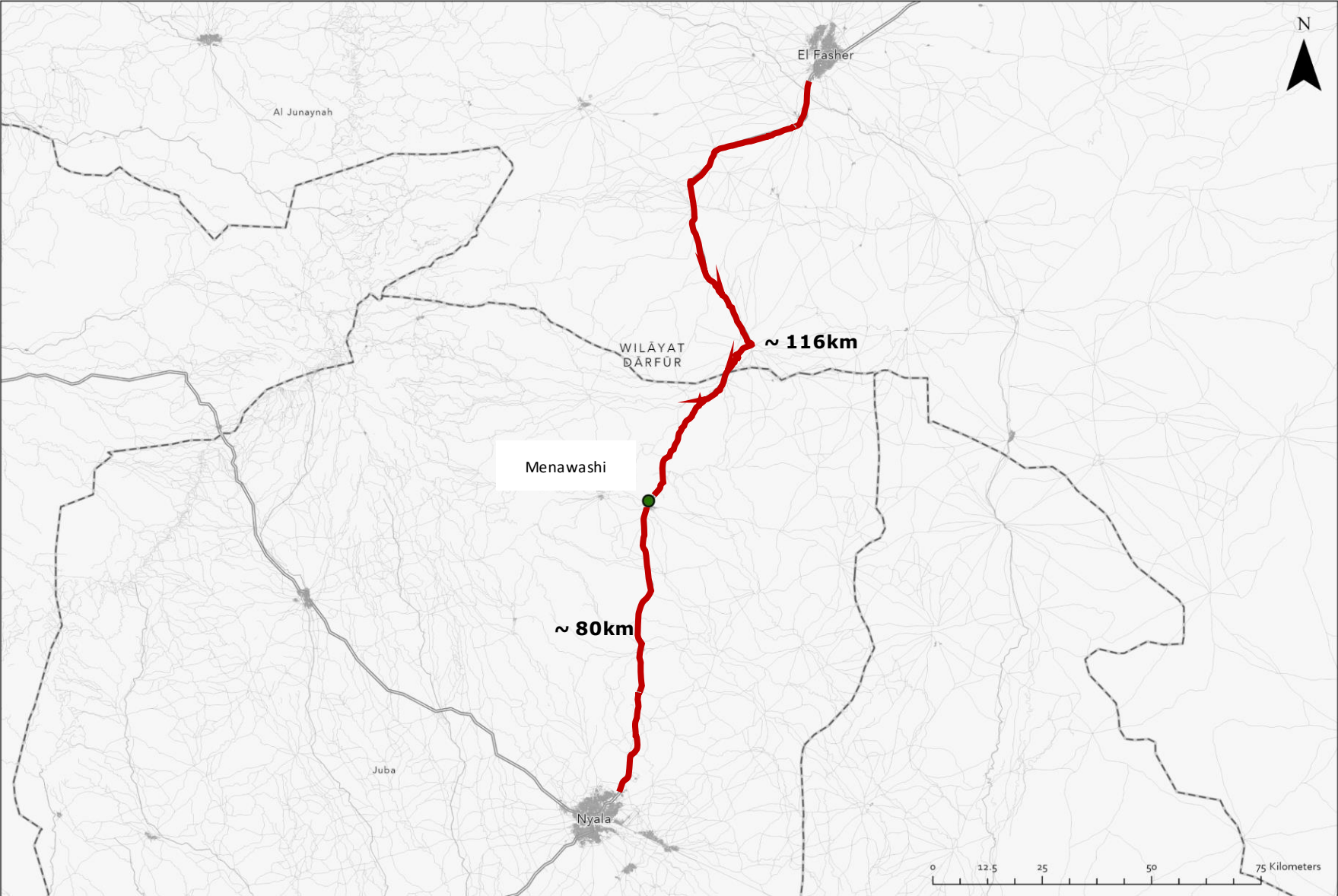
El-Fasher supports assessments that El-Fasher is at risk of a multidirectional attack by RSF without safe ingress/egress for SAF supplies, civilians and IDPs, and humanitarian aid. As RSF has attacked communities to the west of El-Fasher and RSF is assessed to control Mellit, north of El-Fasher, the finding that SAF does not hold this strategic position along a main road between El-Fasher and RSF-controlled Nyala indicates that RSF forces will likely move unimpeded towards Zamzam, the largest single IDP camp in Darfur, and join any larger-scale RSF engagement against El-Fasher.

Methodology

Yale HRL utilizes data fusion methodologies of open source and public and commercially available remote sensing data. Yale HRL produced this report through the cross-corroboration of open source and remote sensing data, including satellite imagery and thermal sensor data. Human security concerns were accounted for as part of the decision to release specific data and findings; potential civilian risk was rated as minimal because it is assessed that the combatants are aware of this situation.

ⁱ “Sudan Displacement Data,” 21 September 2023, IOM HDX, <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/sudan-displacement-data-idps-iom-dtm>, archived at <https://perma.cc/4DS6-S9DB>

Menawashi is located on the Nyala–El-Fasher Road



MAP PRODUCED: 21 AUGUST 2023

MAP NOTE: Visualized points represent locations assessed in satellite imagery

SOURCE: Esri, HERE, LSIB, UN OCHA, GADM.org, Esri, © OpenStreetMap contributors, HERE, Garmin, Foursquare, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS

Destroyed Structures Observed at SAF Outpost Near Menawashi

According to analysis of satellite imagery collected between late 2023 and early 2024, multiple buildings and structures were probably destroyed at the Menawashi SAF outpost between 31 May and late December 2023. Debris were visible within and outside of previously erected structures. Additionally, ground discoloration consistent with thermal scarring was observed at the northeastern section of the outpost between early December 2023 and early 2024.



DOI: 20 April 2024

- A. Possible thermal ground scarring
- B. Destroyed structure
- C. Structure with razed roof



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