# RSF Capture of En-Nahud and Detention of Civilians

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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) corroborates reports that Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured En-Nahud as of 2 May 2025 and that RSF has been conducting extrajudicial detentions that allegedly may include treatment of detainees that may constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment (CIDT).[1] Munition impacts are visible across the northeast areas of En Nahud, the facility previously occupied by the SAF 18th Infantry Brigade appears to have been vacated and damaged, and the main market in En-Nahud was damaged in a pattern consistent with an attack, evidence of which is visible in satellite imagery collected between 26 April and 4 May 2025.

Local news organizations claim that RSF under the command of Ali Rizqallah (Al-Safana), captured the city of En-Nahud on 1 May 2025 and the facility for the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) 18th Brigade in En-Nahud on 2 May 2025.[2] En Nahud is a strategic city in Sudan located on the B-26 road between El-Obeid and El-Fasher as well as on a critical junction to the southern route to Babanusa, Muglad, Alliet and El-Daein. There are likely multiple reasons why RSF is attacking and besieging the communities along the B-26 and the corridor running through the Kordofan region. These attacks may partially cut off El-Obeid and the besieged 6th Infantry Division in El-Fasher from additional SAF support while helping RSF merge their area of control with Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in South Kordofan. Yale HRL assesses that this is likely part of a broader campaign to consolidate control across the Darfur and Kordofan regions.

Yale HRL corroborates reports that RSF has conducted widespread detention in En-Nahud. Yale HRL geolocated video footage from 6 May 2025 of RSF marching dozens of detained men in civilian clothes east along the main B-26 road in front of the En-Nahud local police headquarters. The detained men are marching in single file and most of them have their hand on the shoulder of the man in front of them.[3]

Video footage shows treatment of detainees in RSF custody in En-Nahud that may constitute Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment. In footage posted on 7 May 2025, several armed men with RSF insignia sing mocking chants with sexualized language in unison while surrounding and rubbing the head of a man in civilian clothes who is dancing while visibly distressed. The detained man's arms may be bound behind his back. Twelve other men in civilian clothing with bound arms specifically lie face down on the ground and chant along with the members of RSF. These chants are likely under duress.[4]

Yale HRL identifies thermal scarring and fire damage in satellite imagery on 4 May 2025 to structures in the main market En Nahud consistent with a targeted attack. Sudan produces approximately 80% of the world's gum arabic supply and En Nahud, connecting West Kordofan to the Darfur region, is one of its primary markets for gum arabic, ground nuts, sesame, and has a large regional livestock market.[5]

Open sources, the En Nahud Resistance Committee, and news organizations have reported that RSF has conducted widespread extrajudicial killings and detentions, as

well as looting and destruction, including of markets and medical facilities.[6] The En Nahud Resistance Committee reports that RSF reportedly went house to house and "terroriz[ed] civilians and carry[ed] out 'cold-blooded murders.'"[7] The International Organization for Migration (IOM) also reported that an estimated 1792 households were displaced from En-Nahud on 1 May 2025.[8] RSF has previously conducted systematic attacks on civilians that involve targeted extrajudicial killings of men, boys, and children; conflict-related sexual violence; and targeted destruction of homes, markets, and other infrastructure essential for survival. This includes critical protected infrastructure such as hospitals.

## 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 International Committee of the Red Cross, "Rule 90: Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment," Customary IHL, accessed 7 May 2025, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule90, archived at https://perma.cc/545Z-WBQP

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5 Sudan Tribune, "RSF attacks Sudan's El Nahud, residents report killings, looting" May 1, 2025, https://sudantribune.com/article300370/; Richa Naidu and Khalid Abdelaziz, "How a key ingredient in Coca-Cola, M&M's is smuggled from war-torn Sudan," *Reuters*, https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/how-key-ingredient-coca-cola-mms-is-smuggled-war-torn-sudan-2025-03-04/, archived at https://archive.ph/g5t2Y
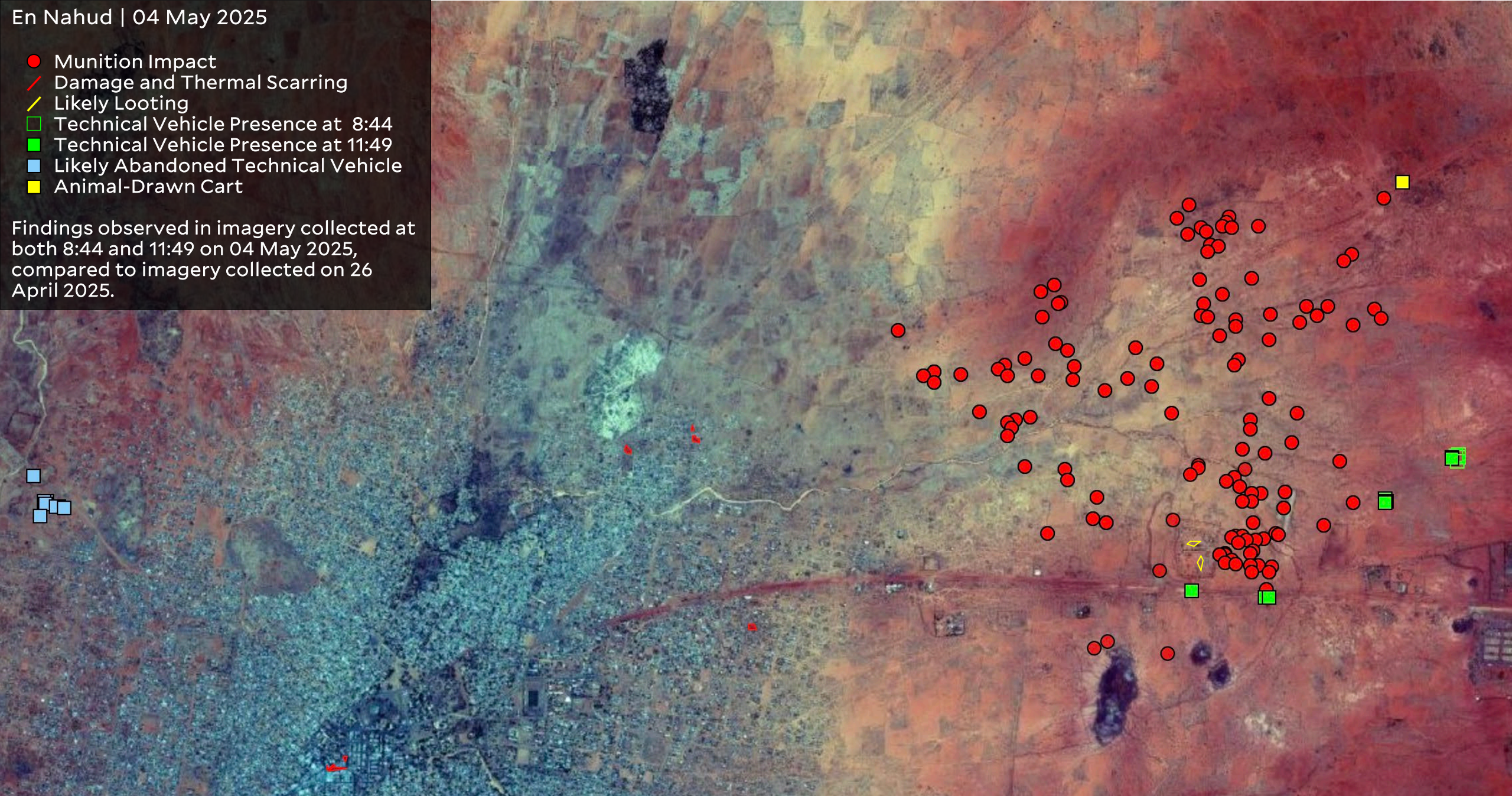
6 Deutsche Welle, " السودان.. مقتل مدنيين بعد سيطرة الدعم السريع على النهود " May 3, 2025, https://www.dw.com/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%87%D9%88%D8%AF/a-72425738, archived at https://perma.cc/93QR-GS6T; Al-Quds, " «الدعم السريع» تجتاح » مدينة النهود وترتكب مجزرة: 300 قتيل ونهب أسواق ومستشفى " May 2, 2025, https://www.alquds.co.uk/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%87%D9%88%D8%AF-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B1/; Sudan Doctors Network (@SDN154), " Sudan Doctors Network: Rapid Support Forces Execute Over 100 People, Including 21 Children and 15 Women, and Loot Medical Supplies, Markets, and the Teaching Hospital in Al-Nuhud," May 2, 2025, https://x.com/SDN154/status/1918276092399620356, archived at https://perma.cc/5FV9-LG27

7 Sudan Tribune, "RSF attacks Sudan's El Nahud, residents report killings, looting" May 1, 2025, https://sudantribune.com/article300370/

8 International Organization for Migration, "DTM Sudan Flash Alert: Conflict in An Nuhud (An Nuhud town), West Kordofan," Update One, May 4, 2025, https://mailchi.mp/iom/dtm-sudan-flash-alert-conflict-in-an-nuhud-an-nuhud-town-west-kordofan-update-001, archived at https://perma.cc/5F3X-EQ75

En Nahud | 04 May 2025

- ● Munition Impact
- ╱ Damage and Thermal Scarring
- ╱ Likely Looting
- ☐ Technical Vehicle Presence at 8:44
- ■ Technical Vehicle Presence at 11:49
- ■ Likely Abandoned Technical Vehicle
- ■ Animal-Drawn Cart

Findings observed in imagery collected at both 8:44 and 11:49 on 04 May 2025, compared to imagery collected on 26 April 2025.

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# Market, En-Nahud

## THERMAL SCARRING AND DAMAGE OBSERVED BETWEEN 23 APRIL-04 MAY 2025

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 23 April and 04 May 2025 of En-Nahud shows thermal scarring and damage to several structures within the market of the city.

Analysis of lower resolution imagery collected by Planet shows that the attacked occurred during the dates 30 April and 03 May 2025.



Thermal scarring and damage

23 April 2025 © 2025 Maxar, USG-Plus

04 May 2025 © 2025 Maxar, USG-Plus

# SAF 18th Infantry Brigade Base, En-Nahud

## VEHICLES OBSERVED BETWEEN 26 APRIL-04 MAY 2025

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between 26 April and 04 May 2025 shows an absence of vehicles and temporary structure consistent with the vacation of the SAF 18th Infantry Brigade Base in En-Nahud.

Debris is also newly visible, and an artillery piece has been repositioned.



Legend (left image):
- Vehicles and temporary structure
- Vehicles
- Artillery piece

26 April 2025 © 2025 Maxar, USG-Plus



Legend (right image):
- Absence of vehicles and structure
- Absence of vehicles
- Artillery piece repositioned
- Debris

04 May 2025 © 2025 Maxar, USG-Plus

En-Nahud | 03 May 2025
An active smoke plume is observed in satellite
imagery of eastern En-Nahud on 03 May 2025

Smoke

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03 May 2025 | © 2025 Planet PBC, USG-Plus

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En-Nahud

En-Nahud Local
Police Headquarters

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وين غضب الصحراء

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https://medicine.yale.edu/lab/khoshnood/