

# Key Findings | The Impact of Systematic Razing of Agricultural Communities around El-Fasher: A Remote Sensing Study

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Yale School of Public Health's (YSPH) Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) corroborates reports that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) intentionally targeted agricultural communities led to the deliberate starvation of the people of El-Fasher. This study assesses that RSF intentionally razed 41 communities from 31 March to 12 June 2024. Months after being razed, the majority of these communities experienced little to no agricultural activity according to this landmark study's analysis using remotely sensed environmental data. The intentional razing of these communities corroborates the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan's February 2026 [report](#) that RSF "deliberately imposed conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of non-Arab communities, in particular the Zaghawa and the Fur," demonstrate a "genocidal path." This report is the first study of its kind that uses remotely sensed data to assess food insecurity in conflict settings to corroborate an alleged campaign of intentional starvation.

## Key Findings:

RSF intentionally razed 41 communities near El-Fasher, Sudan from 31 March-12 June 2024. Using remote sensing data including satellite imagery, Yale HRL assesses that these communities were burned intentionally based on forensic analysis of patterns of damage to buildings.

- Twenty-four percent (10) of the 41 attacked communities were razed more than once. At least six communities were targeted for burning three or more times, including one community razed at least seven times.
- Yale HRL assesses the pattern of fire damage observed when the communities were razed as unlikely to be naturally occurring.
  - In 2024, HRL observed 176 thermal detections, indicating likely active fires, within 2km of communities. These detections represent a 40x increase in thermal detections within 2km of communities compared to a total of only two detections between 2019-2023. This spike in thermal activity is inconsistent with historical data.

**Depopulation:** Months after the attacks occurred in 2024, most communities remained damaged and appeared depopulated – and thus would have been unable to plant food that would traditionally help feed the El-Fasher area according to HRL's analysis of vegetative growth indicators.

- **Overgrowth in Communities Indicates Depopulation:** Employing a novel analytic method, HRL found that the majority of communities attacked in 2024 became overgrown with grass. The vegetative overgrowth patterns and analysis of other data collected of these communities in 2024 indicate that no or very few people were likely present months following razing events.

**Decreased Agricultural Activity:** Yale HRL found that razed communities missed the 2024 planting season as demonstrated by the absence of visible activity in agricultural areas, including empty or overgrown fields near the communities months after razing events.

- **Smaller Fields Are Further Away:** Yale HRL assesses the average size of farming fields became 82% smaller than previous years. This analysis found the fields that remained were located much farther from communities in 2024 by an average of 368.08 meters (4.6 times further) compared to previous years.

## Impact

- **Accountability:** This study provides new evidence that may support accountability for crimes following the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission to the Sudan's [findings](#) that RSF's mass killings, related atrocities, and 18-month siege in El-Fasher "reveals the intent of the Rapid Support Forces to destroy the Zaghawa and Fur communities in whole or in part," demonstrating the "hallmarks of genocide."
- **Methodology Expansion:** The methods used in this report can help to understand food security within communities in nonpermissive environments during active conflict.