

Unidentified Grave Sites

Mellit, North Darfur, Sudan

14°08'53.85"N 25°34'03.09"E

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Incident Date: October 2013 & March 2014

Fatalities: 90+

Injured: 10+

Aggressor(s): Rebel groups such as (SLM-AW), (LMJ-TH, and (SLA-AW)

Victim(s) Profile: Army Personnel, Central Reserve Forces Personnel, Sudanese Armed Forces members & civilians (including an infant child)

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Introduction

The following report examines the possible locations of unmarked graves in Mellit, a district in North Darfur, Sudan, which first appeared around 2013-2014. This time period overlaps with clashes in the town involving groups like Sudan Liberation Army (SLA-AW), Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM-AW), and the Liberation Movement for Justice (LMJ-TH) which resulted in the loss of many lives. The Sudan team has observed the emergence of suspected mass graves during the time period, potentially indicating the burial place of those killed during the conflicts.

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Findings Summary

Satellite imagery indicates the presence of an unmarked cemetery located near the outskirts of Mellit, a town situated in North Darfur, Sudan. Historical imagery indicates the burial ground first appeared around 2013-2014 and gradually began increasing in size over the following years. The appearance of the potential graves are consistent with reports detailing heavy conflict in the town that took many lives.

Findings

Mellit, a town/district of much historical significance located in North Darfur, Sudan, has been one of the many areas in Sudan heavily impacted by conflict. In late 2013, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Sudan Liberation Army (led by Abdel Wahid) (SLA-AW) clashed, resulting in a total of 18 fatalities from both sides.

On Thursday, March, 2014, the Darfur rebel forces claimed to have taken full control over Mellit. Reports indicate 78 army personnel were killed, along with 4 military officers and 10 civilians, while many others- including militia members and Sudanese army personnel- were injured. The rebel forces included the Sudan Liberation Movement (led by Abdel Wahid Al Nur) (SLM-AW) which was under Minni Minawai's command (SLM-MM) alongside the Liberation Movement for Justice (led by Taher Hajar & commanded by Ali Karbino) (LMJ-TH). The rebels reportedly captured 18 Land Cruisers along with arms, ammunition, as well as other military supplies.

During the attacks, about 10 additional individuals were also injured and a woman by the name of "Fatima Humaida Rabih" and her infant son were reported to have been killed. Additionally, over 20 members of the Central Reserve Forces also known as "Abu Tira", were killed. The rebel forces seized army & police vehicles and weapons, ravaged government buildings, and pillaged a market in the town. The forces evacuated Mellit on Friday upon hearing that the RSF was advancing.

Satellite imagery indicates unmarked grave sites located near the outskirts of the town began to expand post 2013. The rightmost site (see Figure 3) has been visible since October 1st, 2021, during the time period in which there was a military coup in Sudan.



Fig 1: Grave sites as of September 10, 2013



Fig 2: Grave sites as of Nov 15, 2014



Fig 3: Grave sites as of Jan 20, 2025.

The coordinates of the sites (left to right) are $14^{\circ}08'53.85''\text{N}$ $25^{\circ}34'03.09''\text{E}$ and $14^{\circ}08'58.46''\text{N}$ $25^{\circ}33'55.33''\text{E}$.

There is no visible marking or identification located at these sites indicating the area is an unmarked cemetery. Nearby landmarks include a mosque roughly 500m away.



Fig 4: Image from Flickr portrays damage done on homes during the clashes in March 2014

Context Analysis

Located approximately 90km North of El- Fasher, Mellit is a remote town that serves as a significant supply route connecting El- Fasher to Libya. It stands as a major hub for trade (livestock, goods, fuel) and is used to supply humanitarian aid to Darfur.

As of April 14, 2024 the town is controlled by the RSF (Rapid Support Forces) who are now directing control over cross border trade routes, especially those from Libya. Capturing the town has allowed RSF to exercise control over other areas north of El Fasher as well.

Conclusion

Due to the appearance of the suspected mass grave sites during the same time periods the clashes occurred in Mellit, it is likely these areas were used as makeshift graveyards to bury casualties during the conflicts. Findings suggest over 90+ people were killed during the conflict and it is probably the grave sites that mark their burial place.

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