



# Killed in Cold Blood

Untold Stories of Extrajudicial Killings  
and a Mass Grave in Sinai



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## **SINAI**

Foundation for Human Rights

Sinai Foundation for Human Rights (SFHR)  
7 Bell Yard, London, WC2A 2JR, United Kingdom  
<https://sinaifhr.org/> - [info@sinaisfhr.org](mailto:info@sinaisfhr.org)

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## Contents

<b><u>I. Introduction and Acknowledgment</u></b> .....	1
<b><u>II. Brief Background</u></b> .....	3
<b><u>III. Methodology</u></b> .....	14
<b><u>IV. Enforced Disappearance as a Prelude to Killing</u></b> .....	17
<b><u>V. Incidents of Extrajudicial Killings Verified by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights</u></b> .....	23
<u>1. Killing of Three Men near al-Karama Neighborhood, East of Al-Arish – March 2015</u> .....	23
<u>2. Killing of Four Men in al-Hasana, Central Sinai – January 2017</u> .....	26
<u>3. Killing of Two Children in al-Munbatih Village, Central Sinai – March 2016</u> .....	29
<u>4. Killing of Approximately 18 Detainees in Bir al-Abd – May 3, 2020</u> .....	32
<u>5. Killing of Ten Young Men in Al-Arish by the Ministry of Interior – January 2017 (Case Study)</u> .....	35
<b><u>VI. Mass Graves: How the Evidence Emerged?</u></b> .....	44
<u>A. Summary of the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights’ Observations of the alleged mass grave site South of al-Arish</u> .....	49
<u>B. Summary of Forensic Architecture’s Analysis of Activity Around and Within the Mass Grave Site</u> .....	53
<b><u>VII. Brief Legal Analysis</u></b> .....	59
<b><u>VIII. Recommendations</u></b> .....	62
<b><u>IX. Annexes:</u></b>	
<u>Annex 1 Letters addressed to Egyptian Officials</u> .....	65
<u>Annex 2 Mass Graves in North Sinai</u>	



## I. Introduction and Acknowledgment

*"Since we began documenting extrajudicial killings in Sinai, I have often found myself paralyzed in moments of shock, staggered by the horror recounted by the victims' families. In those moments, I kept asking myself: if the Egyptian government could do this to Giulio Regeni, what could possibly stop it from doing the same hundreds of times to the Bedouins, those whom no one would ever sympathize with? I am a Bedouin myself, from the tribes of Sinai, and I know exactly what that means."*

- Ahmed Salem, Executive Director, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights

This deeply rooted dehumanization of Sinai's people -especially in times of security unrest- is not a matter of speculation. It was articulated bluntly by a senior Egyptian security official, as revealed in a U.S. diplomatic cable leaked in 2005 (No. 05CAIRO1978\_a). During an official meeting with American diplomats in Sinai, shortly after the 2004 Taba and Ras Shaitan bombings, the official remarked:

***"The only good Bedouin in Sinai was a dead Bedouin."***<sup>1</sup>

This document, classified as *Secret* and issued by the U.S. Embassy in Cairo to the State Department, exposes more than just a private opinion. It reflects a prevailing political-security mindset that legitimized arbitrary detention and extrajudicial killing of an entire marginalized indigenous community. Such institutional bias against Sinai's people did not stem solely from counterterrorism pretexts, but from perceiving them as "*others*", a domestic threat to be subdued, rather than citizens entitled to protection.

In her memoir *The Bone Woman* (2004), forensic anthropologist Clea Koff -who took part in the excavation of mass graves in Rwanda, Kosovo, and Bosnia- recounts what the remains of victims revealed to her.

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<sup>1</sup> See: U.S. Embassy Cairo, "Sinai Bedouin Frustrations," May 17, 2005, Wikileaks Cable 05CAIRO1978\_a, available at [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05CAIRO1978\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05CAIRO1978_a.html)



She asks:

*“Why did those governments decide to murder their own people? I think the answer is self-interest. Particular people in a government of a single ideology... supported national institutions that maintain power for themselves.”*

Through this report, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights seeks to listen to the voices of victims -whether alive or reduced to their remains- to restore their narratives and pose fundamental questions: Who was killed? How? Why? And who is responsible? We write not only for the past, but to ensure that crimes committed in darkness, against nameless bodies, are never repeated, and with the hope that justice and accountability may one day be achieved.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights extends its deepest gratitude to the families who shared their testimonies and entrusted us with their voices, despite the risks and pain. The Foundation also expresses its profound appreciation to its team members, each of whom played an essential role without which this report would not have been completed, nor this mass grave uncovered, save for their courage and determination to reveal the truth.

The Foundation further thanks the team at Forensic Architecture for their partnership and technical support in analyzing the mass grave site and satellite imagery, which formed a cornerstone of this report.

Finally, the Foundation pays tribute to the unnamed witnesses who risked their lives to bring the truth forward, and to all those who contributed silently to exposing what took place.



## II. Brief Background

As is well known, military operations in North Sinai escalated in 2013 against the group *Ansar Beit al-Maqdis*, which later rebranded itself as *Wilayat Sinai* after pledging allegiance to ISIS. From then until 2022, the fighting intensified, accompanied by serious violations committed both by government forces and ISIS militants.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights has concluded that the military operations in North Sinai during this period reached the legal threshold of a non-international armed conflict, and therefore fell under the scope of the laws of war as codified in the Geneva Conventions.<sup>2</sup>

During these years, the Egyptian authorities arrested thousands of Sinai residents in mass arrest campaigns, detaining them in unofficial facilities, including military bases such as Al-Saha Camp in Rafah, Al-Zohour Camp in Sheikh Zuweid, and Battalion 101 in Arish, among others. By their very nature, these arrests amounted to cases of enforced disappearance, where detainees were held for weeks, months, or even years in complete isolation from the outside world.<sup>3</sup>

Many of these detainees were killed in cold blood. Over the years, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, along with other human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch<sup>4</sup> and Amnesty International,<sup>5</sup> has documented cases of extrajudicial killings carried out by the Egyptian army and police against detainees -including children or those who were likely children- in North Sinai. The authorities later claimed these individuals were killed in armed clashes.<sup>6</sup>

However, until now, neither the Foundation nor other human rights or media organizations had documented the existence of mass graves in North Sinai for those secretly and treacherously killed.

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<sup>2</sup> This was also the legal analysis reached by other organizations such as Human Rights Watch. See: “*ISIS in Sinai Near Defeat but Future Unclear: ‘Lesser of Two Evils’ Strategy Fails to Secure Stability or Rights in the Long Run*,” Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, September 26, 2022, available at: <https://sinaifhr.org/show/154>

<sup>3</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Cast into the Abyss: Untold Stories of Civilians Swallowed by Secret Prisons in Sinai,” July 21, 2025: <https://sinaifhr.org/show/577>

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Egypt: Videos Show Army Executions in Sinai,” April 21, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2017/04/21/egypt-videos-show-army-executions-sinai>

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International, “Egypt: Investigate Potential Extrajudicial Execution of North Sinai Men: Six of the Men Were in Police Custody at the Time of Their Killing,” January 23, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MDE1255342017ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Again... Videos Show Extrajudicial Executions in Sinai by the Army and Its collaborators,” August 20, 2022, <https://sinaifhr.org/show/147>





This report documents, for the first time, the presence of a mass grave near the city of Al-Arish, where neither residents nor local activists knew that many of the bodies of those killed were being secretly buried. The site was enclosed within tight military fencing to prevent residents from approaching and to keep military activity inside the grave hidden from public view. There is also evidence suggesting the existence of at least one other grave in central Sinai, along with preliminary information from local residents pointing to additional possible sites.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights was able to identify one of these mass graves through the testimonies of two members of local militias allied with the army in Sinai, who provided initial information about the site. The Foundation used this information to locate the grave and subsequently pursued further research to shed light on it.

The scope of extrajudicial executions has expanded to the point that they have become widely known among the families of detainees in North Sinai -especially those subjected to enforced disappearance- who live in constant fear that their relatives might be killed, sometimes after having personally witnessed their arrest.

Families of victims of enforced disappearance have become accustomed to rushing to the bodies occasionally discovered by residents along desert roads, in order to determine whether their disappeared relatives were among the dead. They search for photographs, names, or even clothing resembling what they were last seen wearing at the moment of their arrest, details that are rarely included in official military and security statements, which seldom provide such basic information about those killed.

## **Fabricated Narratives and Lost Opportunities for Accountability**

Among the most prominent incidents of extrajudicial execution -one that sparked large spontaneous demonstrations in the city of Al-Arish during the victims' funerals- was the killing of ten young men in January 2017. At the time, the Ministry of Interior claimed it had liquidated them



inside a so-called “terrorist hideout” following a security raid, and released a video that allegedly documented the operation.<sup>7</sup>

Yet testimonies from residents unanimously confirmed that some of these young men—at least six of them, whose names were listed in the Ministry’s own statement—had previously been arrested and subjected to enforced disappearance before their deaths were announced. Human Rights Watch also published an analysis of the video, demonstrating how it had been edited and manipulated.<sup>8</sup>

Notably, no similar video has ever since been released by either the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Defense to substantiate alleged clashes. This omission appears to reflect an implicit admission of their inability to provide credible evidence for incidents in which, according to official statements, thousands of men were killed under the claim that they belonged to “takfiri” armed groups

That incident in Al-Arish highlighted the grave violations long endured by the people of Sinai. At the time, a people committee of local and tribal leaders in the city put forward a set of demands, including the release of detainees held without clear evidence or charges, and the establishment of a fact-finding committee to investigate that incident and others like it.<sup>9</sup>

In this context, Dr. Salah Sallam, a member of Egypt’s official National Council for Human Rights, stated that the six individuals named in the Ministry of Interior’s statement among the ten killed were in fact listed on a roster of 650 people alleged to be held without charges. Residents had requested that this list be incorporated into the files of the Presidential Pardon Committee, which at the time was tasked with reviewing the cases of those arbitrarily or unjustly detained, with the aim of securing their release.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Egypt: Possible Unlawful Executions in Sinai,” March 16, 2017: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2017/03/16/301149>

<sup>8</sup> See the previous reference.

<sup>9</sup> Saada Abdelkader, “Tension Between Interior Ministry and Families in Sinai Who Dispute Story of Killing 10 ‘Terrorists’,” Aswat Masriya, January 15, 2017, <http://www.aswatmasriya.com/news/details/72155>

<sup>10</sup> See the previous reference.





Yet none of those demands were implemented. The authorities took no action to investigate or prosecute the officers implicated, allowing these practices to persist without deterrence. In the absence of independent oversight and accountability, police and army personnel in Sinai have come to understand that they operate above the law, acting as they please according to their own whims and personal conscience as though they were “gods who rule without ever being questioned”.

## **How many people were killed?**

It is difficult to obtain reliable statistics on the number of people killed during nearly a decade of war in North Sinai, primarily because the state has never issued transparent or comprehensive data on the victims—their numbers, identities, or whether they were civilians or members of armed groups—nor other essential information.

In general, the Egyptian Ministry of Defense has never acknowledged in any official statement the killing of civilians. At the same time, scattered remarks from officials or semi-official figures suggest that the state has, in some cases, compensated families who lost relatives in airstrikes, artillery bombardments, or other operations. Still, other forms of evidence provide a closer approximation of reality.

Over the years, the Ministry of Defense has issued dozens of official statements claiming the killing of armed elements in North Sinai. In response, researchers at the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights created a database based on reviewing and analyzing these statements issued by the Egyptian Armed Forces’ official spokesperson between 2013 and 2022. This review revealed that the Armed Forces announced the killing of 5,053 people it described as “terrorist elements,” and the arrest of 14,837 others suspected of belonging to armed groups.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Ministry of Interior announced additional numbers of those killed and arrested, but these often appeared in statements attributed to unnamed security sources in pro-government newspapers. As they were not issued officially by the Interior Ministry spokesperson or published on the ministry’s official pages, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights excluded such statements from the referenced database.



But these official figures stand in stark contrast to estimates of the number of militants belonging to extremist groups in Sinai, which -according to most experts and research centers- ranged between 1,000 and 1,500 individuals up until mid-2018.<sup>12</sup>

This contradiction raises fundamental questions: Are these enormous figures credible? And if they are, does this not imply that the majority of those killed were civilians rather than fighters? If so, how many of them were killed by airstrikes or artillery bombardments? How many died in genuine armed clashes? And how many of those clashes were staged or fabricated?

These basic facts, which should ordinarily accompany any security or military operations in a state that upholds the rule of law, remain entirely absent. This, in turn, raises troubling questions about the fate of thousands of detainees whose whereabouts are unknown, or whether they are even still alive today.<sup>13</sup> Despite the repeated occurrence of extrajudicial killings, no comprehensive human rights report has yet been issued to systematically document these incidents. This is precisely what this report seeks to provide. In addition, it presents rigorously documented evidence, published here for the first time, on the existence of a mass grave in North Sinai that is believed to have been used to bury more than 300 people, many of whom were killed in extrajudicial executions consistent with the patterns described in this report and in previous publications.

It should be noted that the figures compiled by the Foundation do not include data issued by the Egyptian Ministry of Interior, which alongside the army has been implicated in widespread violations, including arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings. For example, on 15 March 2018, the Ministry of Interior's spokesperson announced that between 9 February and 15 March 2018 (a span of only 35 days), police forces had "screened" 52,164 people, apprehending them on the basis of suspicion and releasing those whose "status was found to be sound," without specifying how many were not released.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, *The Islamic State in Africa: Estimating Fighter Numbers in Cells Across the Continent*, CTC Sentinel, Vol. 11, No. 7, August 2018, <https://ctc westpoint.edu/august-2018/>

<sup>13</sup> Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, *The Islamic State in Africa: Estimating Fighter Numbers in Cells Across the Continent*, July 2018, <https://ctc westpoint.edu/islamic-state-africa-estimating-fighter-numbers-cells-across-continent>

<sup>14</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Interior, "Video Report on Security Efforts in Sinai," official Facebook page, March 15, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/MoiEgy/posts/pfbid02iX1yPSSWgcbHKWK9m557ASGXocp6ujMdZ9uN8DHXEJfJyDuZgvniMCSchZ5d5DGtl>



## Extrajudicial Execution of Detainees: Between Official Statements and Leaked Videos

The legitimacy of the questions raised regarding the officially announced incidents is reinforced by the fact that the military statements themselves exhibit clear methodological deficiencies. With very few exceptions, these statements entirely omit the names of the individuals alleged to have been killed. Such omissions stand in direct contradiction not only to legal obligations, but also to the stated mandate of the army and police, which are expected to identify, monitor, and dismantle outlawed groups.

The language employed in these statements is formulaic, almost mechanically repetitive - amounting to a “copy-and-paste” narrative- consisting of declarations devoid of substantive information. They are typically terse, limited to generalized claims that a “fire exchange” took place within a “terrorist hideout,” followed by the assertion that all the “terrorist elements” were killed in the course of the confrontation.

Accordingly, the vast majority of official statements exclude even the most elementary details essential to establishing the veracity of such incidents. These include the precise time, date, and location of the operations; the nature and composition of the security force involved; whether any of the alleged militants were apprehended alive and, if not, the reasons why; whether the identities of the deceased were established; and, if not, the procedures employed to that end. Furthermore, nearly all such statements are entirely devoid of any reference to casualties or injuries among security forces themselves, a striking omission that compounds doubts as to their credibility.

It should also be noted that all of these statements are issued exclusively by the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Interior, in the complete absence of any publicly acknowledged role for the Office of the Public Prosecutor or the judiciary. This stands in sharp contrast to both Egyptian and international legal standards, which obligate judicial authorities -whenever an operation is ostensibly carried out for the purpose of law enforcement- to initiate serious investigations to establish the circumstances of the incidents and verify their authenticity.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch, “‘Security Forces Dealt with Them:’ Suspicious Killings and Extrajudicial Executions by Egyptian Security Forces,” September 7, 2021: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2021/09/07/379689>





Such obligations include engaging with the families of the victims to provide information; referring bodies and physical evidence (including confiscated weapons, where applicable) for forensic examination to determine the cause and timing of death and to identify any additional injuries and their nature; and only then authorizing burial. Legal and human rights standards also require the participation of families in these investigations, even if no formal complaints are submitted, in recognition of the sanctity of the right to life as an inherent and non-derogable right, one that cannot be curtailed even in times of violent unrest or armed conflict.<sup>16</sup>

In some of the statements issued by the Ministries of Defense and Interior, the authorities attribute specific armed attacks to those killed, such as the bombing of security facilities or the killing of soldiers in particular operations, without providing any details on how such a link was established between the deceased and the alleged attacks.<sup>17</sup> These particular statements appear to be crafted primarily for an internal audience of army and police officers, rather than for the general public.

According to expert analyses, public admissions by officers in press interviews,<sup>18</sup> and eyewitness testimonies cited in this and previous reports, the extrajudicial killings of forcibly disappeared detainees -followed by claims that they were killed in clashes- are carried out systematically after each attack in which security forces sustain casualties. Egyptian security agencies frame the killing of detainees, suspected -often on the basis of subjective assumptions- of having links to armed groups, as an act of “retribution,” legitimized through religious and ideological interpretations disseminated among government forces. Officers are actively incited to such practices by senior security leaders, including through closed lectures delivered by clerics summoned to security facilities. These sessions serve to justify unlawful killings, normalize violations, and condition officers’ consciences to accept extrajudicial executions as legitimate.

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<sup>16</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death* (2016), UN Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, New York/Geneva, 2017, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol\\_AR.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol_AR.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch, “‘Security Forces Dealt with Them’: Suspicious Killings and Extrajudicial Executions by Egyptian Security Forces,” September 7, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2021/09/07/379689>

<sup>18</sup> Major General Khaled El-Shazly, who held senior positions in Egypt’s Ministry of Interior until 2019, publicly boasted that security forces execute dangerous criminals and drug traffickers instead of prosecuting them, arguing that this is “God’s own command.” *Al-Mawqif Al-Masry* Facebook page, June 15, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/almawkef.almasry/posts/pfbid028dUYrpLui2LEf5WZ5GiDM2C49qwaCnskGfzajAb83e64MnCYnKH P5kmwwLaSz7Zl>



In this context, statements by Egypt's former Grand Mufti, Ali Gomaa, are particularly revealing. He explicitly urged the killing of those he labeled as "outlaws" in Sinai, and described anyone who "attacks" the Egyptian army as "infidels" and "Kharijites".<sup>19</sup> Such religious terminology carries loaded and incendiary connotations, providing a doctrinal rationale for violence and serving to strip victims of their humanity.<sup>20</sup>

This mindset is not new; it also prevailed within the security forces during the 1990s, when Egypt faced a wave of attacks and bombings carried out by armed Islamist groups. At its core, it is a mentality commonly seen in many wars and armed confrontations worldwide, where the rule of law collapses, sanctities are violated, and abuses are committed under the guise of retribution: "They did this to us, so we are entitled to do the same to them." Such hollow justifications appeal to the weaker instincts of soldiers and officers when they operate without any legal restraint or independent oversight, as though they were above accountability, acting solely according to their own whims and personal beliefs.<sup>21</sup>

Compelling testimonies cited in this report, as well as in previous publications by the Foundation and other human rights organizations, demonstrate that the decision to execute a particular detainee -or a group of detainees- may be taken merely on the basis of suspicions that they were providing support to ISIS, even in the absence of any material evidence to substantiate such claims, or simply because of a family connection to an armed group member.

In many cases, these decisions rest on faulty information provided by members of the pro-army tribal militias, locally known as *manadeeb*<sup>22</sup>, who are at times motivated by personal vendettas or desires for revenge. Such life-and-death decisions are made in the course of brief exchanges

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<sup>19</sup> *Kharijites* refers to a historical Islamic sect that emerged in the 7th century, known for declaring other Muslims as apostates (takfir) and justifying violence against them. In contemporary usage, the term is often invoked pejoratively by religious or political authorities to delegitimize opponents and justify extreme measures against them.

<sup>20</sup> Sheikh Ali Gomaa, *Full video of Sheikh Ali Gomaa before Sisi and military leadership*, YouTube, October 10, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNprN6ddA8Y>

<sup>21</sup> Egyptian Dar al-Ifta, multiple statements describing opponents of the government—both peaceful and armed—as "terrorists," "infidels," and "Khawarij," and urging the army and police to "fight them," including groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. These statements never clarified what such "fighting" entailed, nor whether killing detainees was part of the fatwas.

<sup>22</sup> The term "manadeeb" (singular: "mandoub") refers to local tribal collaborators recruited by the Egyptian army in Sinai to support counterinsurgency operations. Their roles have included identifying suspects, providing intelligence, and accompanying military units during raids. Testimonies collected by rights organizations indicate that personal motives—such as revenge or tribal disputes—have at times influenced the information they provide, with fatal consequences for detainees.



between officers and the *manadeeb*, without the slightest semblance of serious investigation, fair trial guarantees, or independent review.

In addition to the near total lack of transparency surrounding these operations, and the scarcity of relevant official data, video footage has over the years surfaced documenting instances of extrajudicial executions. This report presents several such videos for the first time, while others had been included in earlier publications.

These videos show Egyptian army soldiers and officers, along with members of pro-government tribal militias in North Sinai, carrying out field executions of civilian detainees. In these recordings, the victims appeared handcuffed and blindfolded, before official statements later claimed that they had been killed during “clashes with terrorist elements.” The footage reveals a consistent pattern of field executions, followed by false claims that the victims were killed in combat.

Over the course of the war from 2013 to 2022, the Egyptian authorities never explicitly acknowledged that the military campaign carried out against fighters of the ISIS-affiliated group Wilayat Sinai in North Sinai amounted to a non-international armed conflict, which would place them under the scope of international humanitarian law. Even if one assumes that the situation in Sinai did not constitute an armed conflict, international human rights law enshrines the right to life in even stricter terms, making the unlawful killings committed there extrajudicial executions. If it is established that these violations were carried out in a systematic and widespread manner as part of state policy, they may rise to the level of crimes against humanity. Conversely, if the situation is considered an armed conflict, then such incidents constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes, necessitating investigation and accountability.

Echoing public statements made by security officers and pro-government clerics, a legal study published by the State Information Service in 2018 asserted that individuals affiliated with ISIS were not entitled to any legal protection, and that Egyptian government forces were therefore exempt from adhering to the rules and laws governing armed conflict and counterterrorism





operations.<sup>23</sup> In this context, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi also made public statements calling for the use of what he described as “all brute force” in North Sinai. Leaked remarks attributed to him while serving as Minister of Defense in 2013 similarly revealed this permissive approach: he allegedly stated that officers would not be held accountable for shooting demonstrators, raising the question of what impunity could be expected when such fire was directed during a war against an armed group.<sup>24</sup>

Egypt’s Military Justice Law (Law No. 25 of 1966), which regulates mobilization and offenses committed in the context of military operations and wartime, does not clearly or adequately establish protections for those who fall into captivity in line with the Geneva Conventions. Article 4, however, explicitly states that the law applies to prisoners of war. Article 85 defines “field service” as applying to “members of a force, or those attached thereto, when that force is engaged in combat operations against an enemy, whether inside or outside the country,” adding that “rebels and armed gangs shall be considered as enemies.” Article 137 provides that “anyone who commits an act of violence against a wounded or sick soldier incapable of defending himself shall be punished by imprisonment or by a lesser penalty stipulated in this law.”<sup>25</sup>

Yet even these provisions appear to carry little weight in practice. They are effectively nullified by the official and religious rhetoric that strips individuals of their humanity—whether they have committed crimes or not—thereby denying not only their rights but their very recognition as human beings.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights presents this report to contribute to uncovering the truth about extrajudicial killings in North Sinai. By documenting testimonies and incidents, it seeks to recover the narratives of victims and raise fundamental questions: Who was killed? How? Why? And who bears responsibility? This report is not limited to recounting what happened in the past;

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<sup>23</sup> Adel Majid, “Human Rights and Confronting Terrorist Groups,” General Authority for Information, *Studies in Human Rights* (1st issue), July 11, 2018, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/169667/>

<sup>24</sup> Rasd Network, “Rasd | Sisi: The officer who fires gas bombs and birdshot and someone dies or loses an eye will not be prosecuted,” YouTube channel, October 3, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF8Yz8J3MHI>

<sup>25</sup> Law No. 25 of 1966 (the Military Justice Law) remains in force in Egypt and has long been criticized by rights organizations for enabling the prosecution of civilians before military courts in violation of fair trial standards. Although the law contains certain provisions referencing protections during wartime, such as those related to prisoners of war and the treatment of the wounded, these are inconsistently applied and fall short of Egypt’s obligations under international humanitarian law. In practice, military courts have been used as a tool to expand executive and security authority, often at the expense of due process guarantees.



it is intended to serve as a reliable reference for future generations and as a tool to support efforts toward justice and accountability, by documenting the crimes committed by Egypt's police and military forces against civilians in the absence of the rule of law.

These crimes cannot be relegated to perfunctory internal accountability mechanisms conducted by the security agencies themselves, such as Military Intelligence, in which the army and police simultaneously assume the roles of perpetrator and adjudicator. Assigning investigative responsibility to the very institutions implicated in the violations fundamentally undermines the principle of accountability and has, in fact, been a key factor enabling the persistence and escalation of such abuses.

Such crimes and violations can only be effectively investigated by an independent fact-finding commission, transparent, sufficiently resourced, and vested with comprehensive authority, composed of independent judges, lawyers, human rights experts, civil society actors, representatives of the local Sinai community, and tribal leaders. This body must act without delay to gather and document evidence of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, not only to preserve the historical record and alleviate the suffering of families, but also to establish genuine foundations for community peace and security. The evidence collected should form the basis for criminal investigations aimed at prosecuting those responsible for extrajudicial executions before independent civilian courts.<sup>26</sup> The Foundation also calls for appropriate reparations to be provided to the families of those who were forcibly disappeared, tortured, and killed. Absent such measures, peace and community security will remain precarious and under constant threat.

Accordingly, any future framework for transitional justice in Egypt must explicitly incorporate a dedicated pillar for redress to the families of victims who were disappeared or killed as a result of these violations. Such a component is an indispensable prerequisite for authentic reconciliation and the realization of meaningful justice.

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<sup>26</sup> The principle of criminal justice is fundamental to achieving societal peace. While it is understood that in situations of armed conflict and widespread violations, holding every individual accountable for every crime may be an unattainable ideal, abandoning criminal justice altogether under this pretext is a path to the ruin of nations. The legal principles of the Geneva Conventions allow—and at times even encourage—the granting of amnesties in the aftermath of armed conflicts; however, such amnesties must not extend to those involved in patterns of serious crimes, such as extrajudicial killings.



The Foundation calls on member states of the Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution establishing a United Nations fact-finding commission on the grave human rights violations in Egypt. Its mandate should include investigating serious abuses -among them extrajudicial killings- committed by police forces, the army, and allied tribal militias in North Sinai.

## III. Methodology

This report builds on years of monitoring and documentation conducted by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights throughout the years of conflict. In previous publications, the Foundation has documented numerous incidents of extrajudicial killings and issued conclusive reports on mass arbitrary arrest campaigns and the policy of enforced disappearance. Survivors recounted in detail the fear and torture they endured inside army and police facilities, while others described how detainees were killed outside the framework of the law through executions without trial carried out by government forces and by local collaborators or militias allied with the army.

This report further presents detailed accounts of four previously unpublished incidents of extrajudicial killings. In three of these incidents, at least seven men and three children were killed, while the fourth is believed to have resulted in the killing of approximately 18 men. The documentation of these incidents draws on direct interviews with 14 relatives and eyewitnesses, as well as the analysis of leaked video footage and photographs obtained by the Foundation.

In addition, the report provides detailed testimonies from the families of two victims of a fifth incident, widely known and documented in previous reports: the killing of at least six young men in Al-Arish in 2017. This case serves as a stark illustration of the profound trauma and suffering such grave violations inflict on families. It also marked a turning point in exposing the practice of extrajudicial killings in North Sinai. At the time, popular demands coalesced around calls for accountability and the release of detainees. Yet the authorities squandered this opportunity for reform and redress, instead allowing the same pattern of serious violations to persist.

The report also includes a brief reminder of the issue of enforced disappearance, drawing on dozens of testimonies collected by the Foundation over the years. The overwhelming majority of





those killed outside the framework of law and justice had first been held incommunicado, cut off from the outside world, before being executed.

In the sixth section of this report, the Foundation, in cooperation with Forensic Architecture, presents an advanced analysis of a mass grave discovered by the Foundation's team in North Sinai, near the city of Al-Arish. The investigation builds on preliminary information provided to the Foundation by two members of pro-government militias.

For the purposes of on-site examination, the Foundation's team—despite operating under extremely high-risk security conditions—conducted field visits to the site. During these visits, the team carried out systematic documentation, including the capture of a large number of high-resolution photographs, the collection of forensic evidence, and a surface inspection of human remains visible above ground. The team also undertook shallow excavations using simple hand tools, which revealed dozens of bodies buried in shallow layers of soil, in a pattern indicative of hasty and irregular burials.

Subsequently, Forensic Architecture analyzed the field imagery using advanced photo-analysis techniques, in addition to examining both archival and recent satellite images spanning various stages of the war in North Sinai. The integration of on-the-ground evidence with remote sensing analysis enabled the development of technically substantiated conclusions regarding the nature of activities that took place within and around the mass grave over the years.

In addition, the researchers also developed a separate database based on the review and analysis of official statements issued by the Egyptian Armed Forces spokesperson concerning counterterrorism operations in the Sinai Peninsula between 2013 and the end of 2022. The purpose of this database was to track patterns of reported arrests and killings, and to compare them against independent estimates of the number of armed group members, with the aim of identifying discrepancies and potential indicators of violations.

As part of its methodology, the Foundation also examined official and semi-official sources to contextualize and cross-check its findings. This included a 12-page summary report issued by the semi-official National Council for Human Rights following a fact-finding mission to North Sinai

On 17 September 2025, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights addressed formal letters to the Egyptian Minister of Defense, the Minister of Interior, the National Council for Human Rights, and the State Information Service. These communications included detailed inquiries covering all categories of violations documented in this report. To date, no responses have been received. Any replies that may be provided subsequent to the publication of this report will be made publicly available on the Sinai Foundation’s website.

<sup>29</sup> Adel Majid, “Human Rights and Confronting Terrorist Groups,” General Authority for Information, *Studies in Human Rights* (1st issue), July 11, 2018, <http://www.sis.gov eg/Story/169667/>



## IV. Enforced Disappearance as a Prelude to Killing

This report focuses on extrajudicial killings, or field executions carried out without trial. However, these crimes in North Sinai cannot be separated from the practice of enforced disappearance, which in many cases serves as the preparatory stage preceding unlawful killing. The overwhelming majority of victims who were executed had first been arrested by the authorities and held incommunicado, without any judicial process or basic legal safeguards, for periods ranging from days and weeks to several years.

The recurring pattern of violations indicates that placing individuals in secret, unlawful detention sites was not intended for investigation or prosecution, but rather to create an environment in which further abuses could be committed, including torture, denial of contact with families or lawyers, and ultimately, extrajudicial killings leaving no trace behind. The absence of official records of detainees' whereabouts or legal status grants the authorities broad latitude to dispose of them, making enforced disappearance an effective tool for concealing the crime of extrajudicial killing.

In a few rare cases, the Foundation documented instances where individuals were executed only minutes or hours after being arrested from their homes, in full view of their families. Such incidents expose the wholly arbitrary nature of these decisions to kill, and the complete absence of any intent by the authorities to bring those individuals before a court of law. In the context of North Sinai, enforced disappearance thus emerges not only as a crime in its own right, but as a direct preparatory step toward extrajudicial execution, carried out as part of a systematic policy shielded from accountability and independent oversight.

The army converted several of its military compounds into unofficial detention sites, the most prominent being Al-Zohour Camp in Sheikh Zuweid, Battalion 101 in Al-Arish, and Al-Galaa Camp in Ismailia, which houses the notorious military prison known as "Al-Azouli," along with several smaller facilities. In parallel, the National Security Agency under the Ministry of Interior also used its local headquarters to hold detainees in secret, a practice commonly documented outside Sinai as well. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights has documented hundreds of cases of enforced disappearance and torture inside these facilities, many of which were recently compiled in a landmark report titled *"Cast Into The Abyss: Untold Stories of Civilians Swallowed*





*by Secret Detention Centers In Sinai.*” Yet, despite the government’s official declaration of the “end” of the war against ISIS in late 2022, the fate of hundreds of Sinai residents remains unknown.<sup>30</sup>

All of these facilities operate entirely beyond the oversight of prosecutors or the judiciary. Lawyers are not permitted entry, and detainees are denied family visits. Inside, prisoners live in constant fear of daily torture, clinging only to the faint hope of survival, if only by escaping extrajudicial execution.

As documented in dozens of human rights reports, these detainees are held completely off the record: they are not presented to prosecutors, and even if they survive long enough to be eventually referred to the Public Prosecution or the Military Prosecution, the official record lists the date of their detention as the day of their appearance, not the actual date of arrest, which may have occurred months or even years earlier.

The depth of this contempt for the law was starkly revealed when one army officer told a detainee who had spent months in custody before finally being brought before a prosecutor: “Consider that time your military service.”

“Mazen,” a man in his thirties, spent nearly six months in detention at Al-Galaa Camp in 2014. He was later held for shorter periods at Arish Police Station in 2017, before being arrested a third time in 2021 and detained for about six weeks at Battalion 101. During these detentions, he was subjected to various forms of torture, including electric shocks.

Mazen recounted to the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights the feelings of detainees kept in total isolation from the outside world, confined in suffocating, filthy cells where prisoners were forced to relieve themselves in a bucket emptied only twice a day. Amid this severe overcrowding, contagious skin and gastrointestinal diseases spread unchecked, with no medical care provided whatsoever.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Cast into the Abyss: Untold Stories of Civilians Swallowed by Secret Prisons in Sinai,” July 21, 2025: <https://sinaifhr.org/show/577>

<sup>31</sup> “Mazen” (pseudonym), resident of Bir al-Abd.



*“I kept thinking only about how I could get out of prison. Inside, it was as if you were buried alive in a narrow, dark grave—people had put you there, locked it, and walked away. All you wanted was to scream, to cry out: let me out. You don’t think about anything else. Your only thought is to return to your family, to your children—even if it means living in a shack. In that place, your whole concern is survival, and everything else in life loses its value.”*

Mazen added that detainees were fully aware that some among them were periodically taken away by army soldiers, never to return, only to be killed later. He noted that members of the militias, locally known as *al-Manadeeb*, who took part in interrogations alongside army officers, played a decisive role in determining who would be spared and who would be condemned to death:

*“We knew that some prisoners were being executed. When soldiers called out names during the day, it usually meant either release or interrogation. If they returned to the cell, it meant they had just been interrogated. But if a soldier told the prisoner to collect his belongings, then it was considered a release. Naturally, we were all waiting and hoping our names would be called.*

*But the story of executions was different. A soldier would come shortly before dawn, call out certain names, and tell them it was ‘release.’ Yet he would not allow them to take any of their belongings. Those prisoners never came back. And when I was later released and asked about them, I learned they never returned home. To be honest, I already knew before asking: most of those taken for execution had been identified by al-Manadeeb during interrogations.*

*One man I remember came back from an interrogation looking utterly broken. I tried to console him, telling him he would soon be released. But he told me the mandoub had confronted him, saying: ‘I know you, you collaborated with the terrorists.’ The man swore he had never been involved with them, but the mandoub accused him of selling car spare parts from his shop to them. Only a few days later, before dawn, soldiers took him away under the pretense of release. He knew what was coming. He entrusted me with a message for his family before he left.*



*When I was eventually released, I hesitated to visit his family. Were it not for his final request, I would not have gone. All the way there, I tried to reassure myself, telling myself maybe he had really been released and I would find him at home with his children. But of course, when I arrived, his family had heard nothing of him since the day of his arrest.”*

“Mahmoud,” another detainee from North Sinai, spent several weeks in the custody of security agencies in Cairo in 2014, before being transferred to Al-Galaa Camp in Ismailia, where he remained for three months. His account corroborates Mazen’s testimony, explaining that those taken away to be killed were usually removed in the early hours of dawn, and were never permitted to take any personal belongings with them:<sup>32</sup>

*“The first thing is that when a prisoner who’s about to be executed asks the soldiers, ‘Can I take anything with me?’ they tell him, ‘No, don’t bring anything.’ Not clothes, not a blanket, nothing at all.”*

Mahmoud also described a practice that he and other detainees believed was intended to make post-mortem identification more difficult. Soldiers would order detainees being taken from secret detention sites to execution sites—where all traces of them would disappear thereafter—to change their clothes. This way, if photos of the dead were later released by the military spokesperson, the victims’ identities would be harder to recognize, since their faces were often obscured but their clothing remained visible.

*“The second thing is changing clothes. The soldiers bring those prisoners and shout at them: ‘Take off your clothes, take them off, take them all off.’ After they strip completely, the soldiers say: ‘You, put on these trousers and take that shirt. You, put this on.’ They mix up their clothes. It’s not like one person just wears another person’s outfit, it’s a jumble. One prisoner would be wearing the trousers of one man and the shirt of another.”*

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<sup>32</sup> “Mahmoud” (pseudonym), resident of Bir al-Abd.





Despite being held in near-total isolation from the outside world, detainees were at times able to piece together the fate of others under certain circumstances. Mahmoud recalled:

*“After a while, new detainees would arrive from outside, recently arrested. They would first be taken to Battalion 101 and then transferred to al-Azouli. They’d ask us, ‘What’s the news?’ And we would tell them, so-and-so was taken out months ago. They’d respond, ‘He never came home, his family never saw him again. His relatives are still searching for him even now.’ That’s when we knew he had been killed. Forget about him, he’s gone.”*

Ashraf, a former detainee who spent about three and a half months in the dungeons of Military Intelligence in Cairo before being transferred to facilities run by the Ministry of Interior in Sinai until his release in 2019, recounted that after surviving the ordeal of enforced disappearance, he and another survivor who had once shared his cell recognized the bodies of six of their fellow detainees. These men had been taken out of detention in the usual manner, after which nothing more was ever heard of them, having been forcibly disappeared for varying periods inside the Central Security Forces camp in al-Arish, which the Ministry of Interior used as an informal detention site in North Sinai.

Ashraf explained that he was able to identify them after their photos were published in a press statement by the Ministry of Interior. Although their faces had been deliberately obscured, he recognized them by their bodies and the clothing they had been wearing before being taken from the prison. He added that the statement -which he shared with the Foundation- claimed that these men had been killed during armed clashes following an attack on security forces:

*“The executions were staged like a movie scene, something prepared in advance. The security forces wanted to portray the detainees as if they were living in the desert, as if they were members of ISIS. Their clothing had to look a certain way, their hair a certain way, their beards a certain way. That was why detainees inside the prisons were left unshaven and unkempt—so they could be kept as a pool of human stock, from which some would be selected and killed after each attack on the security forces.*



*But there were also specific procedures related to clothing that were carried out to confuse anyone outside who might try to identify a dead detainee by what he was wearing. The whole purpose of changing the prisoners' clothes was to make sure no one could know who these people were after they were killed."*

Mazen, Mahmoud, and Ashraf all concurred with the accounts of many other detainees interviewed by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, that the threat of “liquidation” was a constant refrain during interrogation and torture sessions. Ashraf recalled that one officer from the Ministry of Interior would repeatedly remind him, as a form of intimidation during questioning, that he was “the one in charge of the executions.”

Social media is replete with attempts by families in North Sinai to identify their forcibly disappeared relatives among photos of bodies circulated online, whether published by the military spokesperson or by other sources.

One such case was that of Sheikh Ibrahim al-Menai'i—a well-known figure in Sinai—who wrote on his Facebook account on October 22, 2016:<sup>33</sup>

*“My brother Abd al-Fattah (50 years old) has been forcibly disappeared for two and a half years. We know nothing about him. May God release him if he is alive, and if he has been killed, may God have mercy on him.”*

On October 29, 2017, Sheikh al-Menai'i posted again, stating that he had recognized his brother in one of the Armed Forces spokesperson's press releases, which included photos of those described as “highly dangerous terrorists” killed in clashes with the army:<sup>34</sup>

*“My brother Abd al-Fattah was arrested in late 2014 at al-Hasana police station in Central Sinai while he was on his way to work in Abu Zenima, South Sinai. From that moment we knew nothing about him—until a statement was published*

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<sup>33</sup> Ibrahim al-Menai'i, Facebook post, October 22, 2016, [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0RgTWuHk45XcYwRCCz47xp74NYsPA2scK5CLHkzPAUzq26FvutR7ndLtr93ASzdQwl&id=100001687201900](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0RgTWuHk45XcYwRCCz47xp74NYsPA2scK5CLHkzPAUzq26FvutR7ndLtr93ASzdQwl&id=100001687201900) (accessed September 9, 2025).

<sup>34</sup> Ibrahim al-Menai'i, Facebook post, October 29, 2017, [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02kks6dJ4dxcKZmT35W5UwdF5tPUenhAse6CR6UCSzdFQaVTaYkb1FAjisDzpc6JZjl&id=100001687201900](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02kks6dJ4dxcKZmT35W5UwdF5tPUenhAse6CR6UCSzdFQaVTaYkb1FAjisDzpc6JZjl&id=100001687201900) (accessed September 9, 2025).

*last month, on the 23rd, on the page of the military spokesperson announcing the killing of six highly dangerous terrorists. Among the published photos was that of my brother, who had been missing since 2014, Abd al-Fattah Hassan al-Menai 'i."*

## V. Incidents of Extrajudicial Killings Verified by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights

### 1. Alleged Extrajudicial Killing of Three Men near al-Karama Neighborhood, East of Al-Arish – March 2015:

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights obtained testimonies from three independent sources, along with photographs and a video clip, all of which collectively suggest that three men were most likely killed unlawfully by army forces in March 2015. The Foundation was able to establish the identity of only one of the victims: Mohamed Saad al-Din Hijab.



Figure 1: Three bodies lying in the desert, found east of the Al-Karama neighborhood near Battalion 101 in the city of Al-Arish.





The Foundation researchers interviewed one of Hijab's relatives, who stated that he personally witnessed army forces arrest Hijab at his home in the presence of his family and neighbors. Approximately two weeks later, the family recovered his body. According to the relative, Hijab was 41 years old, a father of four, and a resident of Al-Arish, where he worked as a muezzin for the Directorate of Endowments in North Sinai. The witness added that the family identified Hijab's remains two days after reports circulated of several bodies discovered in al-Karama neighborhood near Battalion 101 in the city of Al-Arish, following information suggesting that one of the corpses matched Hijab's description. The witness recalled:

*"On March 26, 2015, two days after news spread about bodies found in an area near al-Karama, one of our neighbors saw photos of the corpses and told us that people had come across the bodies of three men killed and dumped in a desert area behind al-Karama. He said one of the photos looked very much like Mohamed. So we decided to go and see for ourselves. At that time, we were already extremely worried about him, because the army had taken him from our home about two weeks earlier, and we had no idea where he was. We had reached out to some intermediaries two days after his arrest, and after asking around they told us he was being held in Battalion 101, and that he would be released in just a few days.*

*Mohamed was a quiet man who had never harmed anyone and had nothing to do with politics. He worked as an employee at the Directorate of Endowments in North Sinai, was married, and had four children. How could he end up killed and left in the desert, when he had been detained by the army, in their custody, their responsibility, and everyone in the neighborhood had seen them take him from our home in front of us?"*



Figure 2: A spent bullet casing found next to the three bodies east of the Al-Karama neighborhood, near Battalion 101 in the city of Al-Arish.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights obtained footage from a resident of the al-Karama neighborhood in the city of Al-Arish, who said he captured it on March 24, 2015, the same day the bodies were discovered near Battalion 101. The footage and photographs show three men lying dead in a desert area, their corpses covered with pieces of dark cloth, with no attempt made by those who had brought them there to bury them. The bodies were fully clothed and in an early state of decomposition and swelling, with insects crawling across them, while their facial features remained identifiable. These conditions suggested that several days had passed since death, consistent with accounts provided by local residents.

The source who filmed and provided the material told the Foundation that he observed spent bullet casings close to the bodies. One of the photographs clearly shows a casing stamped with the words “A.R.E.”<sup>35</sup> and “Military Factory 86,” strongly indicating that the victims were killed with “*meri*”<sup>36</sup> rounds, the standard-issue ammunition commonly used by the Egyptian armed forces.

<sup>35</sup> “A.R.E.” ( in Arabic: ع.م.ع.), stands for “Arab Republic of Egypt” (جمهورية مصر العربية), the official designation of the Egyptian state.

<sup>36</sup> *Meri* (ميري) is the colloquial Egyptian term for state-issued military equipment, particularly standard-issue ammunition and firearms.



Both the source of the footage and Hijab's relative confirmed that local residents buried the other two victims in the desert at the same site where they were discovered, as their identities could not be established. The Foundation's researchers also interviewed a third eyewitness, himself a survivor of enforced disappearance in North Sinai, who spent seven months in 2015 held inside Battalion 101. He recounted that Mohamed Hijab had been detained with him in the same cell for several days, during which he was subjected to severe torture with electric shocks and would return from interrogation in extremely poor condition. According to the witness, on one occasion Hijab was taken out for interrogation and never returned.

## **2. Alleged Extrajudicial Killing of Four Men in al-Hasana, Central Sinai – January 2017:**

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights obtained credible information, corroborated by video footage and photographs, indicating that Egyptian army forces carried out extrajudicial executions of four men from a single extended family shortly after arresting them in January 2017. The evidence strongly suggests that the victims were in military custody at the time of their deaths, rendering the incident a field execution prohibited under international human rights law.

The victims were:

- Ayad Salem Suleiman (41)
- Hussein Hassan Hussein (25)
- Khaled Mohamed Salman (21)
- Mohamed Eid Salama (19)

Two relatives of the victims, both of whom witnessed the incident, told the Foundation that on January 27, 2017, a military unit raided the al-Mutamathni area in al-Hasana, Central Sinai, and arrested the four men. Within minutes of their detention, soldiers led them outside the homes of local residents in the Mutamathni community, bound their hands behind their backs, and shot them dead in front of their families.



# Killed in Cold Blood

Untold Stories of Extrajudicial Killings  
and a Mass Grave in Sinai



Figure 3: Ambulances next to a Bedouin house, with individuals untying the restraints of four civilians who had been executed in the field.

*“Army forces came to the village at around 3 in the afternoon. They arrived in two Humvees, all of them masked, dressed in military uniforms, and heavily armed. They immediately headed to the young men’s houses, storming inside without permission, and took all the men who were at home in front of their wives and children, calling them ‘takfiris.’ No one dared to resist, people were terrified, especially since the soldiers had their weapons pointed at us. Anyone who tried to ask a question was shouted at and threatened with being shot.*

*They didn’t ask a single question, nor did they explain why they were taking them. They tied the four men’s hands behind their backs, marched them outside in front of their families, forced them to lie down side by side on the ground, and then the officer himself shot them, executing them one by one, in cold blood. We all saw it happen, but we couldn’t move because the soldiers had surrounded us with their weapons raised.*

*What broke our hearts was that there was a little boy they were about to execute too. His mother screamed, ran toward them, and snatched her son from their*

*hands while crying and begging. Before leaving, the officer told the soldiers: 'Let's go... I've ruined myself in this life and the next!'*

*Everyone was in shock; no one understood what was happening. But about three days earlier, three soldiers had been killed on the road near the village, so we felt that what happened was revenge for those soldiers. God rest their souls. But the young men were completely innocent, they had nothing to do with weapons, nothing to do with terrorism, nothing at all against them."*

Exclusive video footage obtained by the Foundation from one of its sources corroborates the accounts provided by local residents. The recording shows the four bodies lying face down in front of a small, single-story building in a desert area, their hands bound behind their backs with ropes and pieces of cloth, still dressed in their clothes and shoes. Large patches of fresh blood are visible around their heads. In the background, the voice of the person filming can be heard speaking in a local Bedouin dialect, saying: "These are dead... the army's doing," and "They tied them," in reference to the restraints binding their hands. Toward the end of the video, another man's voice is heard saying: "Enough, enough."



Figure 4: Still image from a video obtained by the Sinai Foundation, showing four bodies lying face down with their hands bound behind their backs, with visible bloodstains around their heads.



Two separate photographs show the same scene: the same building with the four bodies lying on the ground, while local residents gathered nearby. An Egyptian ambulance, clearly identifiable by its distinctive colors, appears in the images, along with a medic who had arrived to collect the bodies. These visual materials are consistent with the known features of the al-Mutamathni Community, where Bedouin families reside in relatively small, single-story homes, scattered across an open desert landscape.

### **3. Alleged Extrajudicial Killing of Two Children in al-Munbatih Village, Central Sinai – March 2016:**

In addition to testimonies from local residents, the Sinai Foundation obtained exclusive footage that constitutes compelling evidence of the extrajudicial execution of two children in March 2016. Army forces arrested and then executed Jamal Salim al-Ghoul (12) and Mohamed Shtaywi al-Ghoul (13), both from the al-Ghoul family of the Tarabin tribe in Central Sinai.

The photographs and video analyzed by the Foundation show the boys' bodies partially covered with sand amid a cluster of small rocks, both still dressed in their full clothing. One of them appears with his hands tied behind his back with a blue rope. The position of the arm and hand of the other body suggests that the images were likely taken during the stage of rigor mortis, within six to twelve hours of death.





Figure 5: The bodies of the two children, Mohamed and Gamal al-Ghoul, partially covered with sand, with one of them shown with his hands bound behind his back with a blue rope.

Another video captures the voice of one of the relatives of the child Jamal as he inspects his body after it was transferred to what appears to be a place for washing and shrouding. The footage shows multiple gunshot wounds to the boy's head, neck, and chest. A relative of the children also told the Foundation that they observed what they believed to be signs of torture on his body. The footage conveys the family's anguish, shock, and profound sense of injustice as they prepared the children for burial. In the video, the voice of the child's relative can be heard saying:

*"Look, look at the injustice. They shot him with a Barand<sup>37</sup>. Look at his head. By God, they stitched him all over with bullets. There is no power and no strength except with God."*

Interviews conducted by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights with eyewitnesses from the area revealed widespread outrage at what they described as the "field execution of two innocent children." Witnesses emphasized that the boys posed no risk or security threat and had merely

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<sup>37</sup> Barand" is a colloquial term used locally in Sinai to describe a type of multi-shot automatic weapon firing unusually large-caliber rounds. According to witnesses, the size of the entry and exit wounds indicated the use of ammunition not ordinarily intended for use against individuals, but which inflicted massive bodily damage when deployed on human targets.



been working in an agricultural field at the time of their arrest. According to residents, the two children were apparently killed after being suspected of recognizing the identities of local collaborators who were accompanying army forces during their movements in Central Sinai, a suspicion that led to their arrest and subsequent execution in cold blood. The Foundation interviewed a relative of the boys, who stated:

*“On March 7, 2016, a military convoy left al-Qusayma camp and went to the village of al-Manbatih. The army arrested six people, among them two of our boys: Jamal Salim al-Ghoul, who was 12 at the time, and Mohamed Shtaywi al-Ghoul, who was about 13. When they were taken, they had been helping one of our neighbors plow his land. The six arrested were: Jamal, Mohamed, the landowner -an elderly man- one of his sons who was deaf and around 36 years old, and two small boys who were the man’s grandsons.*

*They were taken to an army checkpoint in Bir Bada, which had once been a health unit but had been converted by the army into a military outpost. About an hour after their arrest, the soldiers separated Jamal and Mohamed from the others and took them away from Bir Bada.<sup>38</sup>*

*A few hours later, a woman grazing sheep south of al-Manbatih saw the boys’ bodies and recognized them. She went to inform one of our relatives, and we immediately rushed to the place she described. And there they were Jamal and Mohamed, the very boys the army had taken only two or three hours earlier.*

*For God’s sake, what kind of crime is this? Two little boys, their hands tied behind their backs ... shot in their heads ... and they didn’t even bother to bury them properly, just threw some dirt over them and left them there. What is this? What could those children possibly have done under God’s sky to deserve being slaughtered like that?”*

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<sup>38</sup> Witnesses said that the others who had been arrested were later released and recounted those details to local residents



## 4. Alleged Extrajudicial Killings of Approximately 18 Detainees in Bir al-Abd – May 3, 2020:

On May 3, 2020, the Ministry of Interior announced that 18 “terrorists” had been killed in what it claimed was an armed clash inside a house where the men were allegedly hiding in the city of Bir al-Abd, North Sinai.<sup>39</sup> The statement employed the same formulaic, “copy-and-paste” language routinely used in such announcements, declaring results without providing substantive details. According to the Ministry:

*“Information became available to the National Security Sector regarding a number of terrorist elements taking a house on the outskirts of Bir al-Abd city in North Sinai as a hideout and base for launching their hostile operations. The hideout was targeted, and an exchange of fire took place with those elements, resulting in the killing of 18 terrorist elements.”<sup>40</sup>*

As with most similar announcements, the statement omitted all basic details: the precise location of the operation; whether all those killed were actually inside the house; whether some might have escaped or been apprehended alive; why none were taken into custody; whether their identities were established or their names disclosed; what procedures, if any, were followed for identifying the dead; and whether there were casualties among Interior Ministry forces. Each of these elements constitutes essential information that an official statement about an operation of this scale should contain.

Pro-government television channels and newspapers framed the incident as an “act of retribution” for the killing and wounding of two army officers and eight soldiers in Bir al-Abd in an attack believed to have been carried out by Wilayat Sinai two days earlier.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Al-Shorouk, “Interior Ministry: 18 Terrorists Killed Near Bir al-Abd After Their Hideout Was Targeted,” May 3, 2020, <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=03052020&id=60a86bed-aaf5-422a-9873-064369ca892d> (accessed September 9, 2025).

<sup>40</sup> Al-Ahram (state-owned newspaper), “Interior Ministry: Killing of 18 Terrorists in Bir al-Abd,” May 3, 2020, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2403642.aspx> (accessed September 9, 2025).

<sup>41</sup> Al-Watan, “For You in Retaliation There Is Life...,” May 3, 2020, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4732621> (accessed September 9, 2025).





However, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights interviewed two eyewitnesses from the vicinity of the killings. Their testimonies strongly indicate that an unspecified number of detainees were transported to the site and summarily executed in cold blood, after which ambulances were summoned to remove the bodies.

The first witness was a woman from the al-Ruwaq neighborhood in Bir al-Abd, who recounted:

*“On May 2, 2020, police forces came and spread out across al-Ruwaq, the neighborhood where I live. They were in our street, the one that leads to al-Ruwaq and the Bir al-Abd shore, from the church at the beginning of the street all the way to the cemetery. Soldiers went up onto the rooftops and spread throughout the area, circling repeatedly. They told people not to leave their homes, and everyone was afraid, nobody went out. They remained in the neighborhood from late afternoon until sunset, and then they left.*

*Later, around 2:30 a.m. on May 3, during Ramadan, we were awake for suhoor, the street suddenly filled with police vehicles. They passed by our house and continued toward the cemetery.*

*I was in the kitchen, and the window that looks out onto the street was slightly open. From there I saw two large green prison transport trucks, along with three white minibuses with tinted windows and the armored police vehicles. That’s what I was able to make out, but there were more vehicles.*

*The convoy continued until it stopped by the cemetery. They brought out people who were clearly detainees, there were many of them, though I couldn’t count exactly how many. They took them down to a sandy area with no houses. Immediately afterward we heard terrifying gunfire, bursts of shots, then silence, then more shots, and finally complete silence. A short while later, around eight ambulances arrived. They stopped on the street, loaded bodies, and drove away.”*





A second testimony obtained concerning the same incident, came from a man who happened to be inside a house under construction in the area. Taken by surprise when the Police arrived, he was overcome with fear and decided to hide. The second witness, a resident of Bir al-Abd, stated:

*“It was in the early hours of May 3, 2020. I was in Bir al-Abd on the road leading out of the town toward Lake Bardawil, in a place called ‘Hitana’. An hour before dawn, I could hear Qur’an recitations and supplications being broadcast, as is customary before the Fajr prayer. Suddenly, I saw many Police vehicles driving past the inhabited part of the area and stopping at Hitana, where there was only one under-construction, abandoned house, just pillars and half-built walls.*

*The vehicles positioned themselves to form a barrier on the side facing the houses. Then an armored vehicle, painted in olive drab, known locally as ‘al-Fahd,’ arrived. About 17 or 18 detainees were brought out of it. Their eyes were blindfolded, and their hands and feet were bound together, right hand tied to right foot, with the left hand and foot left loose. Masked men then emerged. From their uniforms and accents, they appeared to be Bedouin. They were wearing olive jackets and had traditional headscarves (al-mareer) wrapped around their heads. These men distributed the bound detainees around the area: some near the abandoned house, others near a tree and an old hut.*

*Four of the masked men opened fire, killing the detainees in cold blood. Afterward, the blindfolds were removed from the victims’ eyes, and weapons were placed beside them to make it appear as though they had died in combat. Their bodies and the weapons were then photographed. Once the killings were completed, the ‘al-Fahd’ armored vehicle departed, leaving behind the Police vehicles, which continued to provide cover. No more than ten minutes later, about seven or eight ambulances arrived. They loaded the bodies of those who had been shot and then left. The Police vehicles departed immediately after the ambulances. The entire operation did not take more than half an hour. When they left, nothing remained behind except bloodstains and the slippers of the people who had been killed.”*



## **5. Killing of Ten Young Men in Al-Arish by the Ministry of Interior – January 2017 as a Case Study:**

This incident was extensively documented by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Nevertheless, we revisit it here, as noted earlier, due to its significance in understanding this practice and the grave violations it entails.<sup>42</sup>

In January 2017, the Ministry of Interior announced the killing of ten young men in the city of Al-Arish, claiming they were “armed terrorists.”<sup>43</sup> In its statement, the Ministry named only six of the victims, while asserting that the identities of the other four were still “being determined.”<sup>44</sup> The Ministry also released a video purporting to show a raid on a building and the bodies of some of the ten men.<sup>45</sup> Families of several detainees recognized their relatives among the dead shown in the video, triggering spontaneous mass protests in Al-Arish during the funerals.<sup>46</sup>

Family testimonies confirmed that the six men had been arrested and forcibly disappeared before their deaths were announced. Human Rights Watch analyzed the video, showing it was staged and manipulated. The analysis noted clear irregularities, including an external floodlight shining into the supposed militant “hideout,” one victim seen kneeling with his hands bound before being shot, and pools of blood inside the building indicating bodies were moved before filming.<sup>47</sup>

Strikingly, no similar video footage was ever released again by the Ministry of Interior, which appeared to be a tacit admission of its inability to provide credible evidence of such alleged clashes, despite continuing to announce the killing of hundreds of men under similar circumstances, labeling them “armed takfiri elements.”

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<sup>42</sup> Amnesty International, “Egypt: Investigate Potential Extrajudicial Execution of North Sinai Men: Six of the Men Were in Police Custody at the Time of Their Killing,” January 23, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/01/egypt-investigate-potential-extrajudicial-execution-of-north-sinai-men/>

<sup>43</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Interior, official statement, Facebook page, January 13, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/MoiEgy/posts/1287341047976222>

<sup>44</sup> The Interior Ministry and other authorities have since provided no further information about the other four men.

<sup>45</sup> See the previous reference.

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Egypt: Possible Unlawful Executions in Sinai,” March 16, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2017/03/16/301149>

<sup>47</sup> See the previous reference.



In its statement, the Ministry of Interior claimed that the men belonged to “terrorist groups,” alleging that they were “accustomed to moving between apartments and abandoned sites, changing their hideouts throughout the day, and using multiple aliases to evade security pursuit.” These assertions, however, were entirely contradicted by family testimonies. Relatives explained that some of the victims had only recently married and had just moved into their new homes, which clearly undermines the claim that they were hiding in abandoned or unknown locations.

This incident shed light on the ongoing grave violations endured by the people of Sinai for years, and it sparked an unprecedented popular protest in Al-Arish.<sup>48</sup> A people committee of local and tribal leaders was formed, which put forward several demands, including the release of detainees held without evidence and the creation of a fact-finding committee to investigate this incidents.<sup>49</sup>

During that period, Dr. Salah Sallam, a member of Egypt’s official National Council for Human Rights and a prominent public figure in North Sinai, stated that the names of six of the ten men killed were included on a list of 650 individuals alleged to be detained without charges, residents had asked that this list be submitted to the Presidential Pardon Committee, which had been tasked with reviewing cases of those arbitrarily detained with a view to securing their release.<sup>50</sup> Yet none of these demands were met: the authorities failed to investigate the incident or hold the implicated officers accountable, and the practice continued thereafter unchecked.

Previously, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights gathered detailed testimonies from relatives of two of the ten young men—Ahmed Youssef Mohamed Rashid (22) and Abdel-Aati Ali Abdel-Aati (23). Published here for the first time, these accounts offer critical insight into the material and psychological impact of these abuses, not only on the victims’ families but also on the wider community.

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<sup>48</sup> Heba Afify, “Unprecedented Civil Action in Arish After Security Forces Announce Killing of 10 Local Youths,” Mada Masr, January 15, 2017: <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/01/16/news/u/unprecedented-civil-action-in-arish-after-security-forces-announce-killing-of-10-local-youths>

<sup>49</sup> Saada Abdelkader, “Tension Between Interior Ministry and Families in Sinai Who Dispute Story of Killing 10 ‘Terrorists’,” *Aswat Masriya*, January 15, 2017, <http://www.aswatmasriya.com/news/details/72155>

<sup>50</sup> See the previous reference.



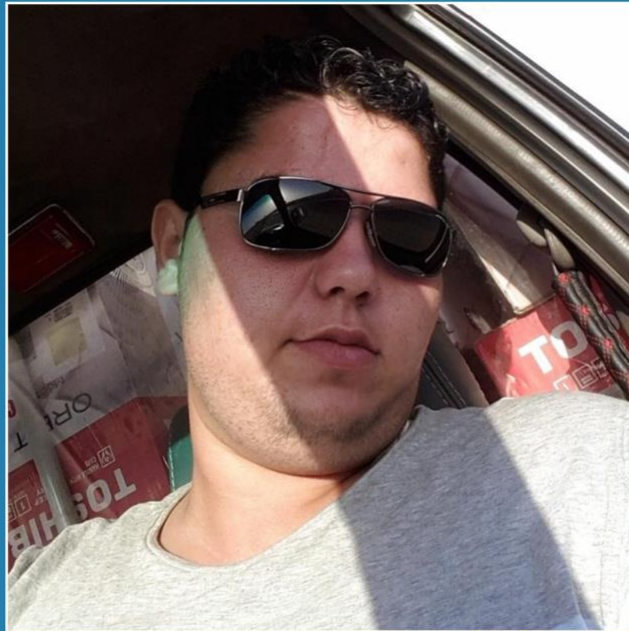


Figure 6: Ahmed Youssef Mohamed Rashid, one of the six young men named in the Ministry of Interior's statement.

## Testimony of the Wife of Ahmed Youssef Mohamed Rashid

Ahmed's wife, who had only recently married him, witnessed his arrest and was herself beaten by the officers, which caused her to miscarry their unborn child. She recounted:

*"On October 17, 2016, I was still a new bride. I had just gotten married, and I was sitting with my husband when suddenly the door of our apartment was smashed open. I didn't know what was happening. I asked, 'What's going on?' and my husband said, 'It's the police.' We were sitting inside the room. They came in, took him downstairs, then brought him back up again. He was beaten, injured, covered in blood. I kept asking them, 'What's going on? Did he do something? Is there a complaint against him?' But it was as if I wasn't speaking at all. One of them grabbed me and kept hitting me until I lost the baby I was carrying. They killed my unborn child. They didn't just kill my husband, they killed my child too. Now I have two martyrs in heaven, God willing.*



*They started smashing everything in the apartment. I said to one of them, 'I'm a bride, don't destroy our home.' He replied: 'Tough luck, bride,' then started hurling vile insults, words I had never heard in my life.*

*Later, they took me away with him. Ahmed was behind me on the stairs, and I was in front of him. He said, 'I just want to say one thing.' One of them uncovered his eyes and told him, 'Say it.' Ahmed said, 'Leave my wife. Don't take her, take me only.' One of them then beat him badly, and there was blood all over the house from top to bottom, just from Ahmed. Then they told him, 'Your wife is going to the security directorate before you.' Ahmed didn't know what to do. They dragged him away and put him in the armored vehicle. They also took me and put me in with him.*

*At the door of the house, I heard one soldier tell another, 'Leave her.' The other replied, 'No, take her.' The first repeated, 'Leave her,' but he insisted, 'No, I like her, take her.' Finally, another soldier intervened, saying, 'Leave her, leave her.' Then one of them gestured for me to sit silently in a corner, so that even Ahmed would not know I was outside the vehicle.*

*My husband went to meet God thinking I was with him, but he didn't know I was left behind. Afterward, when I kept asking about him, they only told me: 'It's just procedures. Nothing against him, just procedures.' They said he'd be released. I sent telegrams to the Public Prosecutor and to the Minister of Interior, not once but several times. Nothing happened, no one ever replied. All I knew was that they said it was just investigations, and that he would be released"*

She recounted that no formal charges were ever brought against him, even after months in custody:

*"If my husband had done anything, they would have filed a case against him. If he had committed a crime, they would have prosecuted him. But the biggest proof that he was innocent is that they never charged him with anything. If my husband was guilty, they would have taken him to court, but not like this, not this way.*

*Until the day I heard of his death, I was still sitting there, waiting at any moment for Ahmed to knock on the door, believing it was just investigations that would*



*soon be over. Then suddenly, such a shocking news: while we were sitting together, my husband's uncle came in and asked, 'Have you heard anything?' We said no, why? He replied, 'They say Ahmed and Abdel-Aati and the other young men with them have been liquidated.' I said, that can't be true, Ahmed is a prisoner, and I couldn't say anything else at that moment. I just whispered, 'Truly to God we belong, and to Him we shall return. O God, reward me in my calamity and grant me better than it.' After that, I broke down, I just collapsed.*

*Then some people told me the news wasn't certain, that there were no bodies, that nothing was confirmed. Some insisted it was true, others denied it, and I didn't know what to believe. When it was finally confirmed, people suggested—and posted on Facebook—that the families should gather at the Ayoub clan's guesthouse to decide on next steps.*

*I want to say something; we must not stop, we must not remain silent, so that others don't suffer the same fate as Ahmed, Abdel-Aati, and the others. If we stay silent, tomorrow or the day after, other detainees will meet the same end. We don't want that to happen. We have never been people who stay silent. We must be one voice, one hand. All the families need to stand together. Those who gathered yesterday at the guesthouse—I thank them deeply, because they are the ones who will bring justice for the boys. And more families must join, because only if we all rise up together will we bring justice for them.”*

## **Testimony of Ahmed Rashid's Mother**

*“On October 17, 2016, it was a day we will never forget, no one can imagine what we went through. Around 1:15 in the afternoon, we were shocked when the door burst open and security forces filled the building, surrounding it completely. They went straight upstairs to Ahmed's apartment. I kept asking the officer, 'What's going on?' But there was no response at all, as if I was talking to no one.*

*Then they brought Ahmed down from upstairs, took him outside, and put him on the armored vehicle. After that, they came back again, searched the building,*





*and brought him down into my own flat, downstairs. They had with them an iron pipe like the ones used in plumbing. Then the officer saw me standing there, and he told me, 'Go into that room and don't come out.' So I went into the room, of course, and I couldn't leave. But I could hear everything and every word they hurled at my son. The insults they shouted at him were beyond belief, words that no one should ever have to hear spoken in such a way.*

*I heard them smashing up everything in my house, they broke the refrigerators, the glass in the bedroom, the dresser, nothing was left untouched. I could hear the destruction. They beat Ahmed downstairs in my flat. I couldn't see him clearly, but his grandmother, who was 78 years old, saw everything. They beat him right in front of her. To this day she cannot forget the sight of Ahmed being beaten, her heart breaking as she watched, unable to do anything. She kept pleading with them, 'Have mercy, have mercy. He is his parents' only son, they have no one else, don't beat him!' But no one listened.*

*After that, they went upstairs. His grandmother also witnessed them smashing and destroying his apartment and hers, leaving nothing intact. She saw it all, and she can tell you what she witnessed. Ahmed's blood was on the stairs and in his apartment, where they dragged him as they took him down. They even tried to take his wife—indeed, they dragged her as far as the armored vehicle before sending her back. When Ahmed begged them not to take her, they beat him again even more brutally. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs against every tyrant and oppressor.*

*I received the news about my son while I was sitting with his grandmother and his wife. We first heard it through the internet. That day, I hadn't opened the internet myself, but the news came to us from outside. His uncle heard it first, and when he came to us he said that on the internet people were saying the Ministry of Interior had issued a statement claiming they had killed ten 'terrorists,' and that Ahmed Youssef's name was among the ten.*



*Of course, we were devastated. The only thing that could cool the fire in my heart, that would make me feel that we had truly secured justice for my son would be for the people to rise up together. What gave me strength was the idea of the families coming together. It lifted our spirits. I prayed, ‘O God, give them strength.’ We were heartened by the unity we saw. Even some people who hadn’t fully believed in the cause before were moved. It stirred the youth, it stirred the women, it stirred the men. It stirred every part of society.”*

## **Testimony of Abdel-Aati Ali Abdel-Aati’s Aunt**

*“He had a three-month-old baby at the time, and he was married. He relied on God and on his work, and, thank God, he had built a life for himself. We stood by him, all of us. Abdel-Aati was arrested, and from a trusted source we knew he was being held by State Security.. He spent 100 days in detention before they ‘liquidated’ him. He was executed because of the attacks on the al-Matafi checkpoint. Al-Arish was on fire that day because of those terrorist groups.<sup>51</sup> The police killed the young men to save face before their commanders—so the head of State Security wouldn’t be dismissed, so the Minister of Interior wouldn’t be dismissed, so all the State Security leadership wouldn’t be dismissed.*

*They all scrambled to protect themselves. They didn’t have terrorists in their hands; the ones in their custody were detainees, people whose lives they were responsible for. When you took him, you took him under your protection. Where was your conscience, officer, whether you were a major, State Security, a security director, or the Minister of Interior? We don’t care about titles now. Abdel-Aati was his mother’s only son. His mother is an elderly, dignified woman. He was our soul and our life.*

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<sup>51</sup> In reference to armed attacks on security forces’ military outposts, the Interior Ministry claimed that those killed in Arish were responsible for carrying them out.



*In our neighborhood there were police NCOs; Abdel-Aati hid them and protected them. He once told me, very simply: ‘Auntie, don’t you ever mention that there are police sergeants Abdel-Aati is protecting.’*

*Before they killed the boys, some officers in Al-Arish spread a rumor that this group was going to kill officers in the neighborhood, because they already knew they were going to execute them. They thought that if they said this from the start, the officers’ families would sympathize with them when they killed the group, that all the officers’ families in the neighborhood would side with them. But what happened is that yesterday the mother of one of those officers -the very ones they claimed Abdel-Aati and other youth were going to kill- came to me and said: ‘Until yesterday, my son was calling me in tears, telling me he used to walk around with Abdel-Aati, right up until they took him two days earlier’.*

*What can I say about Ahmed Youssef. He was the very image of decency, dignity, generosity, kindness, and innocence. Ahmed was only 23 years old and he had just married. They arrested him three days after they took Abdel-Aati. Ahmed and Abdel-Aati had just opened a small bakery to start their life. Ahmed would go to the bakery from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. His wife was a month and a half pregnant.*

*The officers came to take him, beating him in front of his wife and grandmother. Could they not have shown respect for an elderly woman? Could they not have spared her the agony of watching her grandson assaulted before her eyes? They even struck his wife when she tried to defend him, pleading, “I’m a bride, have mercy on me.” Their response was brutal: “Forget him and go marry someone else.” They then slammed her against the wall, causing her to miscarry, and sneered, “He’s worth nothing more than a bullet in the head. Go find yourself another husband.*

*What about Abdel-Aati? What could he possibly do? Could he hold a rifle in his right hand? Could he even shoot at anyone with his right hand, when his other*



# Killed in Cold Blood

Untold Stories of Extrajudicial Killings  
and a Mass Grave in Sinai

*hand was disabled and he couldn't move it? These are people I know. As for the rest of the group they killed, to be honest, I don't know them.*

*But it was sheer stupidity on their part, because God wanted to expose them. They took these young men from our own neighborhood, from among us, and everyone here knew they were detainees. If they wanted to fabricate something, they could have taken people from elsewhere. What I mean is: they took them from here, from their own hometown, and their families knew they were detainees. Cowards. God willed to uncover them and shame them, and that is why they did this."*



## VI. Mass Graves: How the Evidence Emerged?

The incidents described above illustrate several cases of extrajudicial killings carried out by army and police forces in Sinai. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights has previously published additional cases,<sup>52</sup> and received repeated reports of bodies found abandoned along roadsides or in remote areas of North Sinai. Local residents frequently reported that these bodies likely belonged to detainees summarily executed, a practice that has become widespread during the conflict.

Prior to this report, the Foundation had not documented evidence of the existence of mass graves in Sinai. This section details how the Foundation uncovered a mass grave near the city of Al-Arish and points to the likelihood of another -possibly more- elsewhere in Sinai, underscoring the urgent need for an independent investigation.

In July 2023, the Foundation was approached by a source who identified himself as a former collaborator with the Egyptian armed forces during military operations against ISIS.<sup>53</sup> He explained that he was using a temporary account on a social media platform, created specifically for the purpose of communicating with the Foundation. The informant provided an approximate description of two sites he claimed contained mass graves of victims extrajudicially executed: one located south of the city of Al-Arish, and the other in the Al-Hasana area of central Sinai.

The source indicated that, over the course of several years, army and police forces had secretly buried hundreds of bodies at the two sites, without any formal procedures or burial rites. He added that some of the victims were extrajudicially executed either at the same locations or elsewhere before being interred there. Drawing on his previous experience working with security agencies during arrest campaigns, he explained that many of those killed were not necessarily armed militants, but rather individuals suspected of involvement without conclusive evidence. According to him, the victims included detainees who had been held for years in unofficial detention sites, as well as others arrested during security raids and subsequently executed shortly after their detention.

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<sup>52</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, "Again... Videos Show Extrajudicial Executions in Sinai by the Army and Its Auxiliaries," August 20, 2022, <https://sinaifhr.org/show/147>

<sup>53</sup> The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights withheld the name of the tribe.



The source also explained his motives for sharing this information, citing what he described as “the ongoing suffering of hundreds of families among his neighbors and acquaintances, who for seven to ten years have been waiting to learn the fate of their disappeared relatives.” He expressed his conviction that these individuals had been executed and buried at the sites. The informant also provided the Foundation with a list of specific names of people he claimed to know the approximate burial locations and dates of their deaths, and requested that the Foundation publish these details so that families could learn the fate of their family members and bring this painful chapter to a close.

The source also shared links to statements published by the military spokesperson on his official Facebook page, which included footage of individuals whose faces had been obscured and whose names were not disclosed. The army had announced their deaths in alleged clashes, describing them as “highly dangerous extremists.” According to the informant, these individuals had in fact been held in military custody at the headquarters of Battalion 101, and he specified their names and burial locations. The Foundation later observed, upon visiting the mass grave site south of al-Arish, a striking resemblance between the site and the set of images published by the military spokesperson and referenced by the source, particularly in relation to the dominant wild flora, topography, and soil characteristics.<sup>54</sup>

In light of the gravity and significance of this information, the Foundation sought to obtain additional evidence that could be independently verified and presented credibly to affected families, the authorities, and the wider public. Based on the details provided by the source, the Foundation pursued two avenues of verification. First, it sought to identify the locations he described, assess the possibility of accessing them on the ground, and determine whether exploratory digging might reveal bodies, human remains, or mass graves. Second, it reached out to members of pro-army local militias in an effort to gather further information about sites allegedly used for mass burials. These steps produced concrete progress, with growing evidence

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<sup>54</sup> Egyptian Armed Forces Spokesperson, “Statement on Killing of Six ‘Takfiris’,” official Facebook page, October 23, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/EgyArmySpox/posts/pfbid02bjf3MibMSTRpLXQ774EEvZa7HWta9z94Qn2LRzQv2vwaH8K4T5hQSUvBUBzY9qs3l>





supporting the plausibility of the initial testimony. As a result, the Foundation decided to treat the matter as a case warranting an expanded investigation.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights team met with another former member of a local militia in eastern Sinai, who said he had been recruited in 2014 by an officer at al-Zohour military camp in Sheikh Zuweid. He reported that during the years of war he took part in security operations and raids alongside the armed forces, operating out of al-Zohour camp in Sheikh Zuweid and Battalion 101 in al-Arish. According to his testimony, his duties included raiding the homes of suspects; manning checkpoints along the Qantara–Rafah Road road to verify the identities of passersby and identify wanted individuals; participating in the interrogation of detainees inside army detention facilities; and taking part in armed clashes alongside army forces against ISIS fighters east of Al-Arish and in various parts of Sheikh Zuweid.

The witness acknowledged that extrajudicial killings were carried out against detainees who had been held in unofficial army camps. His account indicates that the decision to kill detainees was often made merely on suspicion of links to ISIS, even in the absence of conclusive evidence. He further explained that these executions were at times carried out on the basis of false information provided by pro-army militia members “manadeeb”, who were sometimes driven by personal motives, vendettas, or grudges. All of this took place outside any judicial framework and without any form of trial. The witness stated:

*“I interrogated detainees at al-Zohour and Battalion 101. With a clear conscience, I would tell the officer in charge that some of them were sympathizers with ISIS, working with them, or providing them with services, such as delivering food, medicine, or information. Anyone among the detainees who was labeled as a ‘takfiri’ or as someone assisting a ‘takfiri’, their fate was known: death. As for myself, I feared God in the words I gave, because these were matters of life and death; a single word from me could end a man’s life, and a single word could spare it.”*

When asked whether innocent people had been killed due to misclassification by one of the *manadeeb*, he said:



*“Not all fingers are the same. Not every mandoub feared God. Some had no conscience, and innocent people were killed because of them. Sometimes a mandoub wanted to impress the officer by showing that he knew everything about everyone in the area. Other times, it was because of old grudges passed down between tribes and families. And sometimes, when interrogating a detainee who happened to be related to someone known to be in ISIS but could not prove he wasn’t helping them, detention by the government was seen as better than his release. Many people were killed simply because they were related to a member of the organization, even if they had no actual involvement. I don’t want to mention specific stories or names, but I personally intervened twice with an officer to clear the names of two men whom another mandoub had accused of supporting ISIS. I knew they had nothing to do with it, and that it was about settling scores—but no one listened to me.*

*Many of the executions of detainees happened after major attacks. If the army came under a large-scale assault and many officers and soldiers were killed, a group of detainees -already classified beforehand- would be taken out. Often, they were relatives of ISIS members: a brother, a father, or a cousin. To us, that was God’s justice—retribution is life. Just as ISIS treacherously killed our brothers and soldiers, then hid underground, we avenged them.”*

When asked whether he had personally participated in the killing of detainees or individuals classified by the security services as ISIS members, as well as about the sites where the bodies of those executed were buried, he explained that he had not directly taken part in the killings. However, he acknowledged being present at several execution incidents during his time as a *mandoub* within one of the groups collaborating with the army, which operated out of al-Zohour camp in Sheikh Zuweid. When asked about the sites where the bodies of detainees were buried following their summary executions, the witness provided information about a location south of al-Arish, the same site previously identified by the first source. This convergence of accounts strengthened the likelihood that a mass grave existed there and prompted the Foundation to begin exploratory visits to potential burial sites. He said:



*“In early 2017, I received a phone call from Lieutenant Colonel Khaled at al-Zohour camp in Sheikh Zuweid, who was in charge of my group. He told me to come to the camp. Once I arrived, we left in army Humvees and headed to Battalion 101 in al-Arish. This was after a terrorist attack had taken place in the city. I got there around noon. We were given a list with the names of 15 men. I only knew one of them. I was masked, and his eyes were blindfolded, so he didn’t recognize me. There were three manadeeb with us, and we were told we were going out on a mission. After about an hour, soldiers began calling out the names on the list, and we loaded the men into vehicles with their hands and feet tied and their eyes covered. We drove toward the airport road, and approximately 2 or 3 kilometers after the Lehfan checkpoint, we turned east toward an army checkpoint. Just below it there was a borrow pit, in an area where the valley sometimes flooded. When I went down into the pit, it was obvious that many executions had already taken place there. I had heard about the site from other manadeeb, but this was the first time I had seen it myself. We brought the 15 men down and spread them out at the site. When it was over, the officer gave the order to open fire. By God, I didn’t shoot, because I hadn’t been present during their interrogation and only knew one of them. The whole thing was over quickly. The soldiers placed weapons next to the bodies, and the officer photographed the corpses. The next day, the news was released saying that the army had killed terrorists in clashes in al-Arish.”*

The Foundation team began a series of field visits to the first site, located in al-Hasana in central Sinai. Because the spatial description provided by the source was insufficient, the search area had to be expanded, and efforts continued for several months. However, the team was unable to obtain positive results due to the heavy security measures in the area.

Simultaneously, another team visited the second site, located south of al-Arish. The exploratory visit highlighted the scale of the security challenges surrounding the area. The site lies close to a main road, the al-Arish/Abu Aweigila highway, and is adjacent to a newly established security outpost equipped with advanced 360-degree surveillance cameras mounted on elevated towers.





These conditions make it extremely difficult to carry out any exploratory digging without being detected.

What was particularly noteworthy about this site was that both sources had described it with precision, identifying a distinctive feature: a pit dug by local residents prior to 2010 to extract clay, which they used to improve soil quality in less fertile areas. The site forms part of the al-Arish valley, where small tributaries overflow during certain winter seasons when the al-Rawafaa dam in central Sinai fills with water.

Despite these challenges, and by adopting an appropriate field strategy, the team was able to visit the site twice, in December 2023 and January 2024. During both visits, the team collected field evidence, including some personal belongings believed to belong to victims, as well as visual documentation. The team also sought to estimate the number of bodies buried at the site by conducting limited exploratory excavations.

## **A. Summary of the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' Observations of the alleged mass grave site South of al-Arish**

### **1- Upon arrival, the team found that the site consisted of two distinct pits:**

- The first was located approximately 350 meters from the main road, in close proximity to a military outpost. Because of this security sensitivity, the team ruled out conducting fieldwork in that area. Nonetheless, they observed exposed human remains on the surface, including skeletal fragments and torn clothing scattered by natural forces such as wind and seasonal floods, which had left the remains uncovered over time.
- The second section, located to the north of the site and roughly one kilometer from the main road, became the team's primary focus. In this pit, the team documented dozens of human remains visible above the ground. Shallow exploratory excavations, reaching no more than 30 centimeters in depth, uncovered dozens more bodies buried in extremely superficial conditions. The distribution pattern of the remains indicated that the burials had



not occurred in a single event but rather in repeated waves over different periods, suggesting the site was used continuously for years.

## **2- Estimated Number of Victims:**

Despite significant obstacles, the team was able to obtain visual documentation of the remains of at least 36 individuals, representing only a small fraction of the bodies visible on the soil surface. The totality of the evidence collected, including the results of dozens of shallow exploratory excavations and the continued exposure of numerous remains due to natural factors, led the team to estimate that the site contains the remains of more than 300 people buried in an inadequate and undignified manner at this location alone.

## **3- Access Constraints:**

The site is located near a military outpost equipped with advanced surveillance cameras mounted on elevated towers, constructed in 2014 and upgraded in 2022. Its proximity severely restricted the team's ability to work freely and limited the time available for visits. Over the past decade, the armed forces had fully blocked a nearby side road adjacent to the site with sand barriers, while the area surrounding the grave along the al-Arish/Abu Aweigila road, was encircled by multiple checkpoints between 2014 and 2023. These checkpoints were connected by high sand berms that completely obstructed visibility. Although natural forces had uncovered parts of the remains, the location's proximity to these fortifications made it virtually impossible for civilians or passersby to detect the grave, providing a shielded environment for its use as a clandestine burial ground.

while the area surrounding the grave along the Arish/Abu Aweigila road was encircled by several other military checkpoints from 2014 to 2023.

## **4- Burial Practices:**

Most of the bodies appeared to have been buried only superficially, in sharp contrast to traditional practices in Sinai society and to Islamic funerary rites, which require the deceased to be interred at a depth of at least 1.5 meters, placed on the right side, and oriented toward Mecca. The team's observations indicated that the bodies had been disposed of hastily, without adherence to religious or social norms, in a manner consistent with patterns of clandestine burials the Foundation has previously documented in cases of extrajudicial executions.



## **5- Clothing:**

Human remains were found accompanied by clothing, shoes, and eyeglasses. The garments and items observed were consistent with everyday civilian use, and no traces of military uniforms, insignia, weapons, bulletproof vests, or other equipment were found at the site. This suggests that the victims were civilians rather than combatants. It also indicates that the victims were buried as they were at the time of death, without shrouding or proper burial preparation.

## **6- Blindfolds:**

Some skulls retained pieces of cloth tied around the eyes, suggesting that victims had been blindfolded or otherwise restrained prior to death and burial.

## **7- Movement Restrictions**

Over the past decade, North Sinai was subject to a strict curfew, with the movement of people and goods tightly controlled by the military, particularly outside the city of al-Arish. The area where the grave is located was under a nightly curfew -from early evening until morning- between October 2014 and October 2021. In this context, it is highly unlikely that activity on this scale, whether transporting bodies or conducting burials, could have taken place without the knowledge of the armed forces.

## **8- Forced Demographic Change:**

Notably, nearby villages such as al-Qurī'a were forcibly cleared of their residents by the army in 2014, effectively removing potential witnesses from the surrounding area. This depopulation facilitated the use of the site as a clandestine burial ground, shielded from civilian oversight or scrutiny.

The Sinai Foundation enlisted the expertise of Forensic Architecture to conduct an in-depth investigation of the grave site, drawing on their advanced technical capacity in satellite imagery analysis, remote sensing, and spatial and visual data assessment. This collaboration allowed for the independent verification of field testimonies and their corroboration with scientifically verifiable evidence. As detailed in the following section of this report, the observations of the Sinai Foundation team, combined with Forensic Architecture's technical analysis and the already documented record of extrajudicial killings in Sinai, point to a clear conclusion: that some -if not



# Killed in Cold Blood

Untold Stories of Extrajudicial Killings  
and a Mass Grave in Sinai

all- of those buried in this mass grave were victims of extrajudicial executions. Furthermore, the nature of the site, the decade-long security cordon maintained around it, and the forced displacement of nearby communities all indicate that Egyptian authorities -in particular, the armed forces- were responsible for using this site and concealing its existence.

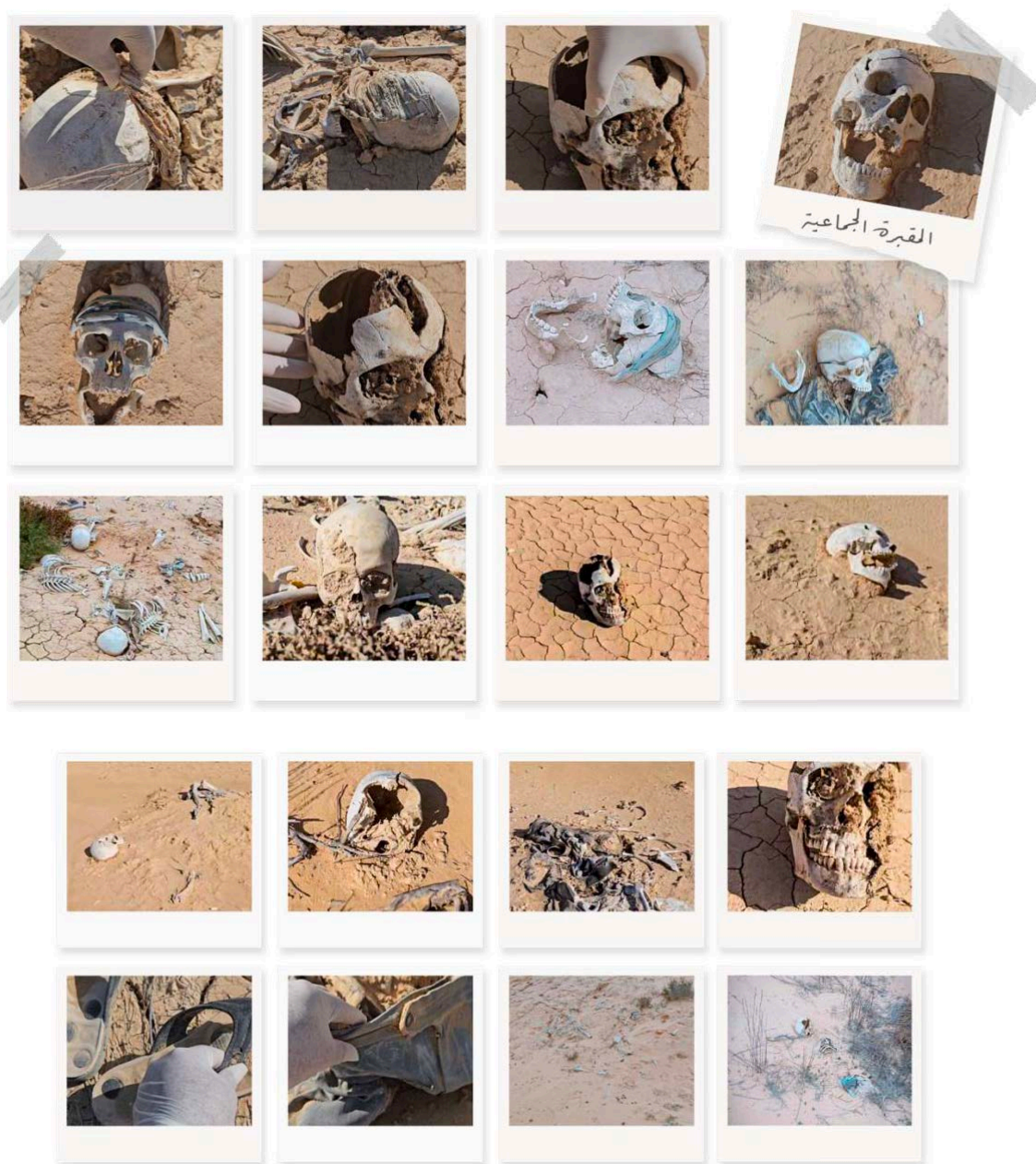


Figure 7: Human remains found by the Sinai Foundation team inside the mass grave located south of the city of Al-Arish.



## **B. Summary of Forensic Architecture's Analysis of Activity Around and Within the Mass Grave Site**

Forensic Architecture (FA) conducted research into the identified mass grave site to establish a timeline of its use and investigate potential patterns of military presence.<sup>55</sup>

They analysed historical satellite imagery analysis to detect temporal changes, identifying signs of military activity such as the appearance of outposts, the presence of vehicles, track marks, and ground disturbances in and around the site.

The FA researchers also reconstructed the mass grave site in 3D, mapping the locations of the bodies visible in media captured on-site by SFHR researchers.

They conducted a track mark analysis to compare the dimensions of the track marks found on-site with those of known military vehicles.

The mass grave site identified by SFHR is located at 30°59'9.70"N, 33°55'21.90"E - approximately 12km south of Al-Arish Airport and less than 1km from the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway.

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<sup>55</sup> Forensic Architecture, 'Mass Graves in North Sinai', September 21, 2025:  
[https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)





Figure 8: Location of the mass grave at 30°59'9.70"N, 33°55'21.90"E, with the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish road visible to the southwest of the site

The FA analysed high-resolution satellite imagery of the mass grave site identified by SFHR, along with surrounding areas. By comparing imagery across time, they looked for indicators of military presence, such as vehicles, tire tracks, ground disturbances, and other visible evidence. The images used in our analysis were captured on different dates, from 2005-2023.<sup>56</sup>

A Satellite imagery analysis carried out by FA, indicates significant militarisation in the vicinity of the mass grave between 2013 and 2016. Within an 8km radius of the site, nine military outposts have been identified along the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway. Of these, seven appeared between 29 August 2013, and early to mid-2015, while the remaining two were established in 2016.

In addition, they observed in satellite imagery that four military outposts C, D, E, and F are connected by sand trenches on the northern side of the highway. Similarly, another four Outposts F, G, H, and I are connected by sand trenches on the southern side of the highway. These sand barriers appear to be designed to conceal activity and facilitate military movements. The closest

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<sup>56</sup> Forensic Architecture, 'Mass Graves in North Sinai', September 21, 2025, See Section D1:  
[https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)



outpost to the mass grave site, F, approximately 750 m away from the entrance of Pit A, and 400 m away from the entrance of Pit B.

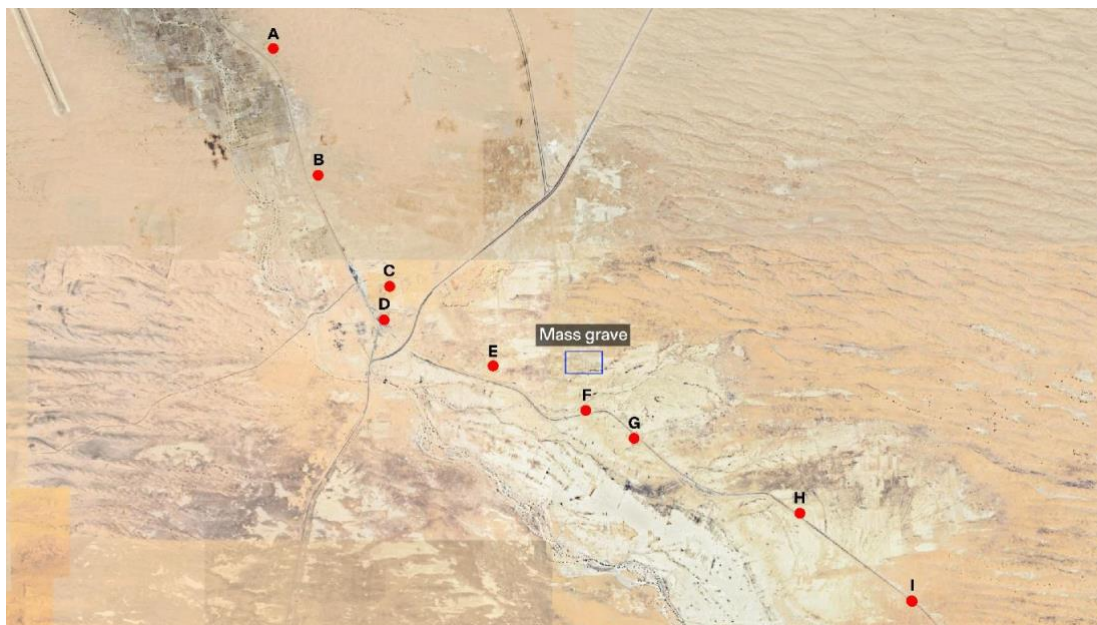


Figure 9: Satellite image dated 25 January 2015, showing military outpost (F) located approximately 750 meters from the entrance of Pit (A), and about 400 meters from the entrance of Pit (B).

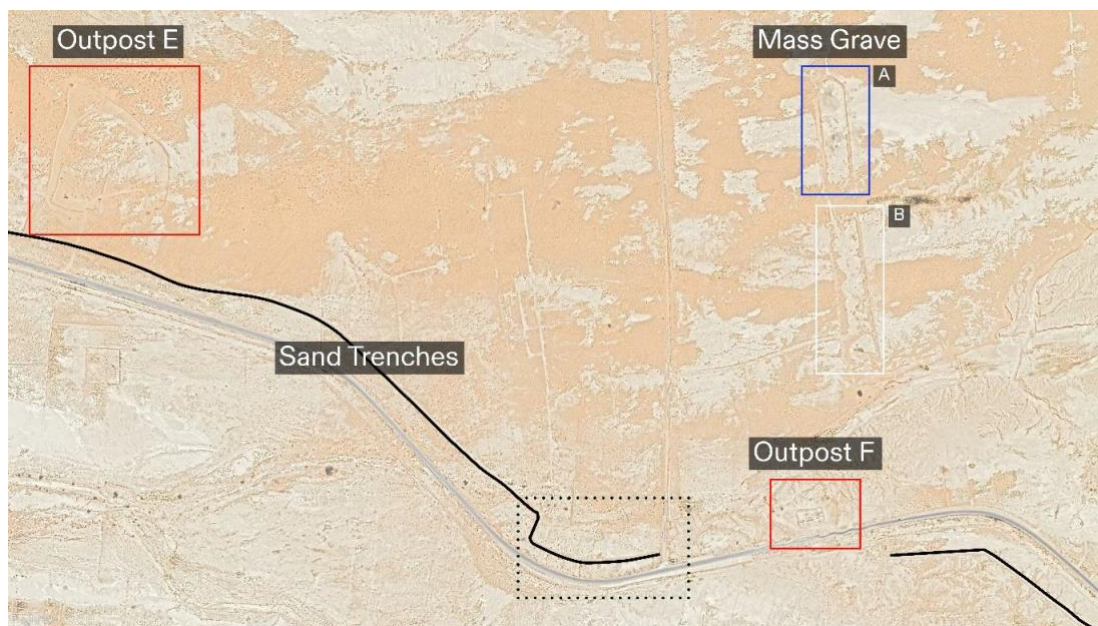


Figure 10: Satellite image dated 15 June 2016, showing the sand trenches connecting two of the military outposts closest to the mass grave site.



Additionally, satellite imagery analysis shows that within the same 8km radius, FA finds evidence of buildings destruction, including civilian infrastructure, between 2013 and 2018.

According to the FA report, Taken together, this configuration not only highlights the heightened security measures and increased militarisation in the vicinity of the mass grave but also suggests that access to the site is significantly restricted for non-military vehicles.

## **Summary of Findings of the Forensic Architecture report:**

The FA researchers observe a general militarisation of the area surrounding the mass grave between 2013 and 2016, marked by the emergence of several military outposts, some in close proximity to the site and connected by sand trenches along the highway. This development is accompanied by the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the imposition of strict curfews<sup>57</sup> beginning in October 2014 till October 2021, severely restricting movement for civilians.<sup>58</sup> This increased military presence indicates a tight control of the area in and around the mass grave by the Egyptian military.<sup>59</sup>

They observe that, between 2010–2023, multiple periods of activity at the mass grave, evidenced by the appearance of vehicle track marks and signs of ground disturbance at various points in time. Notably prior to 2015, the activity at the site is minimal. The most significant activity took place between January 2015 and June 2017, coinciding with the peak of armed clashes in Sinai and a broader escalation of the conflict.<sup>60</sup>

- Track marks are visible in the 14 June 2015 satellite image suggesting a period of activity in the pit between 25 January 2015 and 14 June 2015.

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<sup>57</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Presidential Decree 442/2021: Perpetuating the State of Emergency in North Sinai,” October 6, 2021, <https://sinaifhr.org/show/103>.

<sup>58</sup> Mada Masr, “Curfew and state of emergency in North Sinai follows deadly attacks,” October 25, 2014, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/10/25/news/u/curfew-and-state-of-emergency-in-north-sinai-follows-deadly-attacks/>.

<sup>59</sup> Forensic Architecture, “Mass Graves in North Sinai”, September 21, 2025, see Section D1.1 and D 1.2: [https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Forensic Architecture, “Mass Graves in North Sinai”, September 21, 2025, see Section D2: [https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)



- Possible traces of earth flattening appear in the northern part of Pit A in the 15 June 2016, satellite image, indicating the potential creation of a new access route into the site, sometime between 14 June 2015, and 15 June 2016.
- By 26 August 2016, three craters appear within Pit A.
- Between 3 February 2017 and 2 June 2017, a significant number of new track marks emerge, suggesting another period of intensified activity at the site.
- Between 2 June 2017 and 4 December 2017, these track marks remain largely undisturbed indicating that there was likely little to no activity during this 6-month Period.
- Between 4 December 2017 and 6 June 2018, we see a track mark appearing in between Pit A and B.
- Between 10 November 2021 and 18 July 2023 a few track marks appear near Pit A as well as in Pit B.

Tire tracks analysis indicates that periodic visits to the site are made in and around the site, possibly in military vehicles.<sup>61</sup>

Through 3D reconstruction and mapping of the remains, they observe that:<sup>62</sup>

- At least 36 skulls were identified in Pit A, suggesting a minimum of 36 individuals were buried there. However, reports by SFHR indicate that the actual number of bodies could be significantly higher, with numerous remains unaccounted for in both pits.
- The visibility of the remains at the surface of the soil suggests that the bodies were buried in shallow graves.

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<sup>61</sup> Forensic Architecture, 'Mass Graves in North Sinai', September 21, 2025, see Section E: [https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> Forensic Architecture, 'Mass Graves in North Sinai', September 21, 2025, see Section F: [https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)





- While bone displacement over time is possible due to natural or environmental factors, the widespread distribution of remains across the site suggests that the burials occurred at multiple points in time rather than in a single event.

## **Conclusion of the Forensic Architecture report:**

According to FA researchers,<sup>63</sup> the periodic presence of tire tracks, as well as the evident militarisation of the area around the mass grave sites, suggests that repeated visits to the site occurred between 2015–2023, particularly during the peak of the conflict between 2015–2017, likely by military or military-affiliated vehicles.

The presence of human remains scattered across the site, as well as their shallow burial, may indicate a level of confidence, and control over the area, by those responsible for the burials.

They added that, emergence of a constellation of military outposts and the clearing of civilian infrastructure beginning in 2013 indicates tight control over the area by the Egyptian military. This control, coupled with the imposition of strict military curfews starting in 2014, makes it unlikely that any non-military actors could have accessed the site regularly, let alone bury bodies, without being observed or challenged.

The FA report concluded that taken together, the above documentation suggests that the Egyptian military is not only aware of the presence of human remains on the site, but is likely responsible for the presence of those remains.

For a clearer understanding of the mass grave analysis and its findings, the full Forensic Architecture report—available in the annexes of this report—should be consulted.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Forensic Architecture, ‘Mass Graves in North Sinai’, September 21, 2025, see Section H: [https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> Forensic Architecture, ‘Mass Graves in North Sinai’, September 21, 2025: [https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16\\_FA\\_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf](https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025.09.16_FA_Mass-Graves-in-Sinai-Report.pdf)





## VII. Brief Legal Analysis

Extrajudicial killings without trial constitute grave violations of international human rights law. When carried out on a widespread or systematic scale as a matter of state policy, they may amount to crimes against humanity. If committed in the context of armed conflict, they can also constitute war crimes under the Geneva Conventions. These abuses are compounded by other serious violations, including enforced disappearance and torture. The withholding of information about the fate or whereabouts of those executed also inflicts ongoing suffering on their families, making them victims of these crimes in their own right.

The right to life is a fundamental and non-derogable human right that must be protected under all circumstances, including during armed conflict and states of emergency. This protection is guaranteed under key regional and international instruments to which Egypt is a party, including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, the *Arab Charter on Human Rights*, and the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*.

The *Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions* affirm that such executions are prohibited “under any circumstances.” They require governments to criminalize such acts in domestic law and make clear that “a state of war or threat of war, internal political instability, or any other public emergency may not be invoked as a justification.” The principles also stipulate that public officials may not order, authorize, or encourage others to carry out such executions, and that individuals have both the right and the duty to refuse compliance with such orders.

Governments should enact effective preventive legislation to guard against arbitrary deprivation of life, including by “establishing appropriate institutions and procedures under the law to prevent arbitrary killings, to investigate suspected cases, to prosecute those responsible, and to ensure full reparations.” Egyptian law, however, does the opposite. The 2015 Counterterrorism Law (Law No. 94 of 2015), in particular, undermines fundamental rights by granting security forces sweeping discretionary powers to use lethal force without judicial oversight and shielding them from criminal accountability. Article 8 of the law provides: “Those implementing this law shall not be



held criminally responsible if they use force in the performance of their duties, or to protect themselves against an imminent danger to life, property, or other assets, provided that such use of force is necessary and proportionate to avert the danger.”

These repressive laws also contradict Egypt’s own constitution. The constitution expressly prohibits extrajudicial executions, including under Article 55, which provides that: “Anyone who is arrested, detained, or has their freedom restricted must be treated in a manner that preserves their dignity, and may not be subjected to torture, intimidation, or coercion...” Articles 51 and 59 likewise require the state to safeguard human dignity and the physical integrity of all individuals.

Under international law, state authorities bear a clear responsibility to conduct transparent and independent criminal investigations into members of the security forces suspected of unlawful use of lethal force or involvement in extrajudicial executions. As this report makes clear, however, prosecutorial and judicial authorities have failed to investigate any of these killings, nor have they issued official statements addressing or commenting on the announcements made by the army and security services.

In 2016, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued an updated version of the *Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions*, widely known as the *Minnesota Protocol*, which was first adopted in 1991. The principles also apply in “situations of internal disturbances and tensions.” The protocol provides detailed legal and practical guidelines that governments are required to apply when investigating any “potentially unlawful death.”

According to the protocol’s guidelines, the state’s duty to investigate arises not only in cases of clearly unlawful deaths, but also where there are “reasonable allegations of a potentially unlawful death.” This duty applies even if the authorities have not received a formal complaint. Among the core principles is that victims’ families “have the right to seek and obtain information on the causes of a death and to know the truth about the circumstances and events leading to it.” The protocol further affirms that the right to truth extends to society as a whole. To meet international standards, investigations must be:

- **Prompt:** conducted without undue or unreasonable delay.



- **Effective:** comprehensive in scope, with all possible information collected and multiple methods used to establish the facts.
- **Independent and impartial:** free from institutional hierarchy or chains of command, with investigations into grave violations such as extrajudicial executions carried out under the jurisdiction of a civilian court.
- **Transparent:** both the investigative process and its findings must be open to public scrutiny.

The Minnesota Protocol provides detailed guidance on the investigative process, including scientific, medical, forensic, and legal standards for pre-death analysis, autopsy, preservation and analysis of the crime scene, and the systematic recording of all evidence. The impartiality of forensic experts, the thorough examination of crime scenes to recover all available evidence—including biological and chemical traces—and the expertise of independent firearms specialists are all essential elements for establishing a “living” timeline of the circumstances surrounding and preceding a killing.

Although Egypt has not ratified the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*, all governments are nonetheless required to uphold the rule of law in matters of detention, including by adhering to the standards set out in the United Nations General Assembly’s 1992 *Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*.

In cases of enforced disappearance, authorities are obliged to provide information to the relatives of victims. International law guarantees the right of victims’ families to know the truth in such cases. The *Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa* further require that any person who is arrested or detained be brought before a judge, charged with a specific offense, and tried within a reasonable period of time or released. Anyone deprived of liberty must be held in an officially recognized place of detention.

Based on the foregoing, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights concludes that the violations documented in this report constitute war crimes, as they occurred in the context of a non-international armed conflict and targeted individuals *hors de combat* in an unlawful manner. The



Foundation stresses the urgent need for an independent international investigation, which should also examine whether these violations amount to crimes against humanity, given that they may form part of a systematic pattern or official state policy, and in light of evidence presented in this report and in previous reports, alongside findings from international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

## VIII. Recommendations

### **To the Egyptian Authorities:**

1. Immediately order the establishment of an independent judicial committee to review the status of all detainees from North Sinai held by the army and police. All those whose pretrial detention has exceeded the legal limits, or against whom no concrete evidence of criminal responsibility has been presented, must be released without delay. Those who remain in custody must be referred to fair and transparent trials before an independent civilian judiciary.
2. Ensure retrials for all individuals convicted before exceptional or unfair courts, such as military courts for civilians, State Security Courts, and Terrorism Circuit Courts. Retrials should take place before independent civilian courts that meet fair trial standards, with the immediate release of anyone against whom there is no clear criminal evidence.
3. Establish an independent national fact-finding committee to investigate all cases of enforced disappearance in North Sinai since 2013. The committee should include judges, lawyers, and human rights experts, as well as representatives of the local community and tribal leaders, and must be granted full powers and adequate resources, including the right to visit prisons and detention sites and to review official records.
4. Open a comprehensive criminal investigation, through an independent committee under the Ministry of Justice, into all documented incidents that are likely to constitute extrajudicial executions. Officers and soldiers of the army and police found responsible must be referred to independent civilian courts for prosecution.





5. Provide fair and proportionate compensation to families affected by enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, including material, psychological, and social support, as well as measures of rehabilitation and redress.
6. Ensure the permanent closure and prohibition of all unofficial detention facilities in North Sinai. The Public Prosecution and judiciary should be tasked with conducting regular visits to official detention sites to ensure compliance with the law.

## **To United Nations Member States and the Human Rights Council:**

1. Suspend Arms and Dual-Use Equipment Transfers: Halt the provision of weapons and dual-use equipment to the Egyptian army and police until transparent and independent investigations are conducted into serious human rights violations, particularly enforced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial executions in North Sinai and elsewhere in the country.
2. Suspend or Condition Security Cooperation: Suspend or place conditions on all training programs or security cooperation with Egypt's military and security agencies until they demonstrate genuine commitment to investigating abuses and holding those responsible to account.
3. Establish an Independent UN Investigation: Adopt a resolution at the Human Rights Council to establish an independent UN committee to investigate serious and systematic human rights violations in North Sinai, which may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity, including cases of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings. The resolution should also establish a permanent international mechanism to monitor and document the human rights situation in Egypt on an ongoing basis.



## **To the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights:**

1. **Adopt a Resolution of Condemnation:** Adopt a clear resolution condemning Egypt's serious human rights violations, including those committed in North Sinai, and call for their immediate cessation.
2. **Conduct an Urgent Fact-Finding Mission:** Organize an urgent field mission to North Sinai to investigate the human rights situation, including the violations documented in this report, and ensure that the voices and testimonies of affected residents are heard directly.
3. **Mandate the Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities and Minorities in Africa:** Task the Working Group with examining the situation facing Sinai residents in light of the likelihood that these violations amount to serious breaches of the rights of indigenous peoples.



## IX. Annexes

- **Annex 1: Letter addressed to the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Interior, the Head of the State Information Service, and the President of the National Council for Human Rights**

September 17, 2025

Your Excellencies,

In line with its work documenting violations in North Sinai from 2013 to 2025, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights seeks your clarification regarding serious and recurring cases of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings. Based on research and dozens of direct testimonies from victims' families and eyewitnesses, the Foundation has documented systematic patterns of these violations, in some cases targeting entire families, amounting to grave breaches that may constitute war crimes. In this context, we respectfully submit the following questions, and kindly request your official response so that the Foundation may include the government's perspective in the forthcoming report:

1. Military spokesperson statements between 2013 and 2022 report 5,053 killed and 14,837 arrested. These figures, however, contradict reputable research center estimates that put Sinai Province (ISIS) fighters at only 1,000–1,500 up to mid-2018, alongside hundreds of additional statements from the Ministry of Interior. Does your office hold an official, comprehensive record of those killed and detained, including basic information? And how do you explain the large discrepancy between official numbers and independent estimates?
2. The Ministries of Defense and Interior announced the killing of thousands of individuals suspected of belonging to ISIS between 2013 and 2022. What was the fate of their bodies? Were DNA tests conducted to establish their identities, and were their families informed and the bodies returned to them?
3. How do you explain leaked footage—such as the 20 April 2017 video—showing military or pro-military forces executing civilian detainees, and what accountability measures or investigations have been undertaken? and if so, what were its findings, and why have they not been made public?
4. How do the authorities explain the lack of response to families' telegrams about the disappeared, despite legal obligations to investigate enforced disappearance cases?

We look forward to receiving your response at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ahmed Salem

Executive Director – Sinai Foundation for Human Rights



- **Annex 2**

## Mass Graves in North Sinai

A report by Forensic Architecture, in partnership with the  
Sinai Foundation for Human Rights

20 Sept 2025

**Forensic Architecture**

Goldsmiths, University of London

8 Lewisham Way

London SE14 6NW

United Kingdom

T+44 (0) 20 7078 5387

[www.forensic-architecture.org](http://www.forensic-architecture.org)



## A. BACKGROUND

3. Since the outbreak of a military campaign in Egypt's North Sinai in 2013, mounting evidence<sup>1</sup> has pointed to serious human rights violations committed by the Egyptian military during its campaign against ISIS-affiliated militants. These violations include extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial detention.
4. In 2017, Amnesty International reported<sup>2</sup> on a video which documented extrajudicial executions, which offered a rare glimpse into the hidden abuses committed in the context of this conflict. Amnesty's research confirmed that members of the Egyptian military were responsible for at least seven unlawful killings, including the point-blank execution of an unarmed man and a 17-year-old boy. In 2021, Amnesty International released another report<sup>3</sup> detailing further evidence of extrajudicial executions. Human Rights Watch has also documented similar cases in 2017<sup>4</sup> and 2022.<sup>5</sup>
5. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights (SFHR) has obtained testimonies<sup>6</sup> from two members of a local militia allied with the Egyptian military in its war against ISIS, revealing the existence of mass graves in two separate locations in North Sinai. According to their accounts, the Egyptian military used these sites to bury the bodies of detainees held in unofficial detention facilities between 2016 and 2019. They described how groups of blindfolded, handcuffed, detainees were taken out, executed in field operations, and buried in these locations.
6. SFHR's team located one of these mass graves approximately 20km from a site known as Battalion 101. Battalion 101, in the city of Al-Arish, was the central command headquarters for Egyptian military operations against ISIS in the region and an unofficial detention site used by the same military. SFHR has collected dozens of testimonies from former detainees who endured severe torture at Battalion 101. Many of them reported that detainees were taken away under the pretence of being released, only to never return home.

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, "If You Are Afraid for Your Lives, Leave Sinai": Egyptian Security Forces and ISIS-Affiliate Abuses in North Sinai", May 28, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/05/28/if-you-are-afraid-your-lives-leave-sinai/egyptian-security-forces-and-isis>.

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, 'Egypt: Video of extrajudicial executions offers glimpse of hidden abuses by the military in North Sinai', April 21, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/04/egypt-video-of-extrajudicial-executions-offers-glimpse-of-hidden-abuses-by-the-military-in-north-sinai/>.

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International, 'Egypt: Investigate evidence of extrajudicial executions by Egyptian army in North Sinai', August 5, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/egypt-investigate-evidence-of-extrajudicial-executions-by-egyptian-army-in-north-sinai/>.

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Egypt: Possible Extrajudicial Killings in Sinai', March 16, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/16/egypt-possible-extrajudicial-killings-sinai>.

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Egypt: New Videos of North Sinai Executions', August 30, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/30/egypt-new-videos-north-sinai-executions>.

<sup>6</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'VI Mass Graves: How the Evidence Emerged' <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>

7. They conducted two site visits to the mass grave site discussed in this report, and its surroundings. During these visits, they documented the presence of numerous human remains and collected evidence to support further investigation<sup>7</sup>.
8. For a complete understanding, this report should be read together with the full SFHR report of findings.<sup>8</sup>

## B. SCOPE

9. Forensic Architecture (FA) conducted research into the identified mass grave site to establish a timeline of its use and investigate potential patterns of military presence.
10. We analysed historical satellite imagery analysis to detect temporal changes, identifying signs of military activity such as the appearance of outposts, the presence of vehicle, track marks, and ground disturbances in and around the site.
11. We also reconstructed the mass grave site in 3D, mapping the locations of the bodies visible in media captured on-site by SFHR researchers.
12. We conducted a track mark analysis to compare the dimensions of the track marks found on-site with those of known military vehicles.

## C. SITE

13. The mass grave site identified by SFHR is located at 30°59'9.70"N, 33°55'21.90"E—approximately 12km south of Al-Arish Airport and less than 1km from the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway.



14.

<sup>7</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'VI Mass Graves: How the Evidence Emerged' <https://sinaihr.org/show/625>

<sup>8</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', <https://sinaihr.org/show/625>

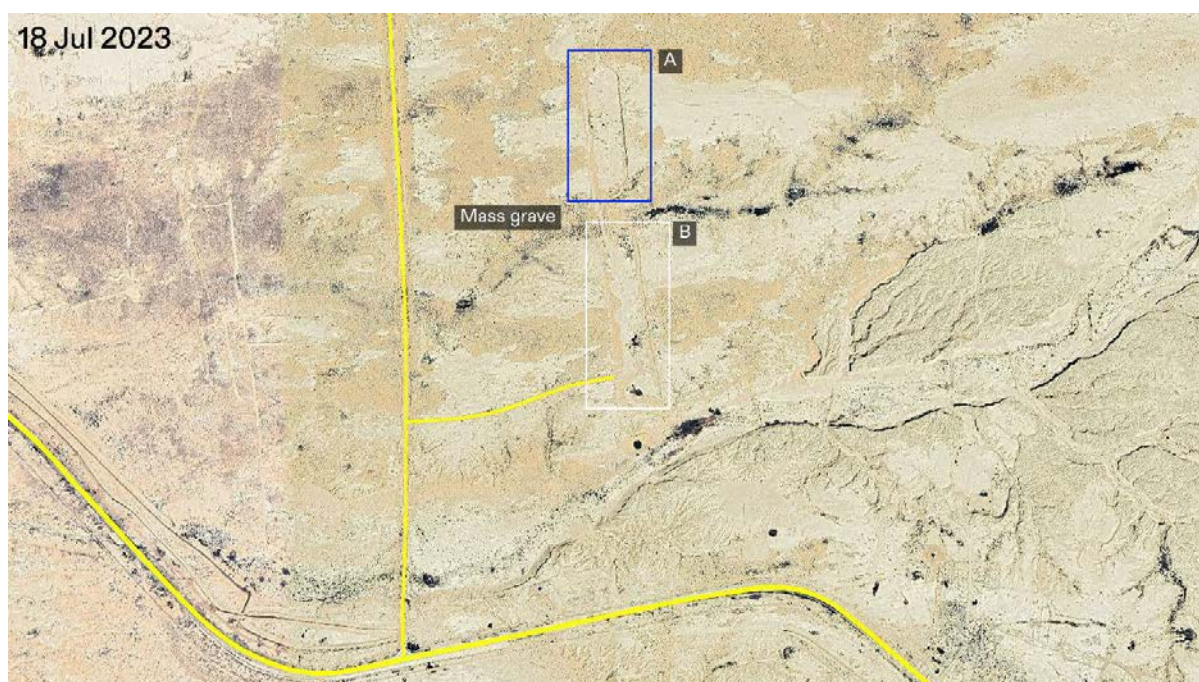




15.

Figure 1: Location of the mass grave - at 30°59'9.70"N, 33°55'21.90"E. The Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway is visible in yellow.

16. The mass grave site consists of two large, connected pits: Pit A (246m x 70m, marked blue) and Pit B (312m x 70m, marked white). According to SFHR researchers, farmers used soil from these pits as fertiliser until around 2010.
17. The entrance to the site appears to be located at the southwest tip of Pit B. Both pits are accessible via a dirt road branching off the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway. During site visits in December 2023 and January 2024, SFHR researchers recorded media evidence confirming the presence of bodies in Pit A, and observed the presence of remains in Pit B.



18.



Figure 2: Location of the mass grave pits (in blue and white) and access route into the site (in yellow).



Figure 3: Mass grave Pit A dimensions.



Figure 4: Mass grave Pit B dimensions.

## D. SATELLITE IMAGE ANALYSIS

21. FA analysed high-resolution satellite imagery of the mass grave site identified by SFHR, along with surrounding areas. By comparing imagery across time, we looked for indicators of military presence, such as vehicles, tire tracks, ground disturbances, and



other visible evidence. The images used in our analysis were captured on the following dates, from 2005-2023:

22. 2005: 27 September
23. 2010: 20 February
24. 2011: 10 October
25. 2013: 29 August
26. 2015: 25 January, 14 June
27. 2016: 6 May, 15 June, 26 August, 28 November
28. 2017: 3 February, 2 June, 12 June, 13 June, 29 June, 4 December
29. 2018: 6 June, 6 August, 12 December
30. 2019: 7 April, 20 June
31. 2020: 30 January, 15 March, 3 April, 5 July
32. 2021: 10 November
33. 2023: 18 July, 4 August, 26 November

#### 1. *Militarisation of the surrounding area of the mass grave 2013 -2016*

34. Satellite imagery analysis indicates significant militarisation in the vicinity of the mass grave between 2013 and 2016. Within an 8km radius of the site, nine military outposts have been identified along the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway. Of these, seven appeared between 29 August 2013, and early to mid-2015, while the remaining two were established in 2016.

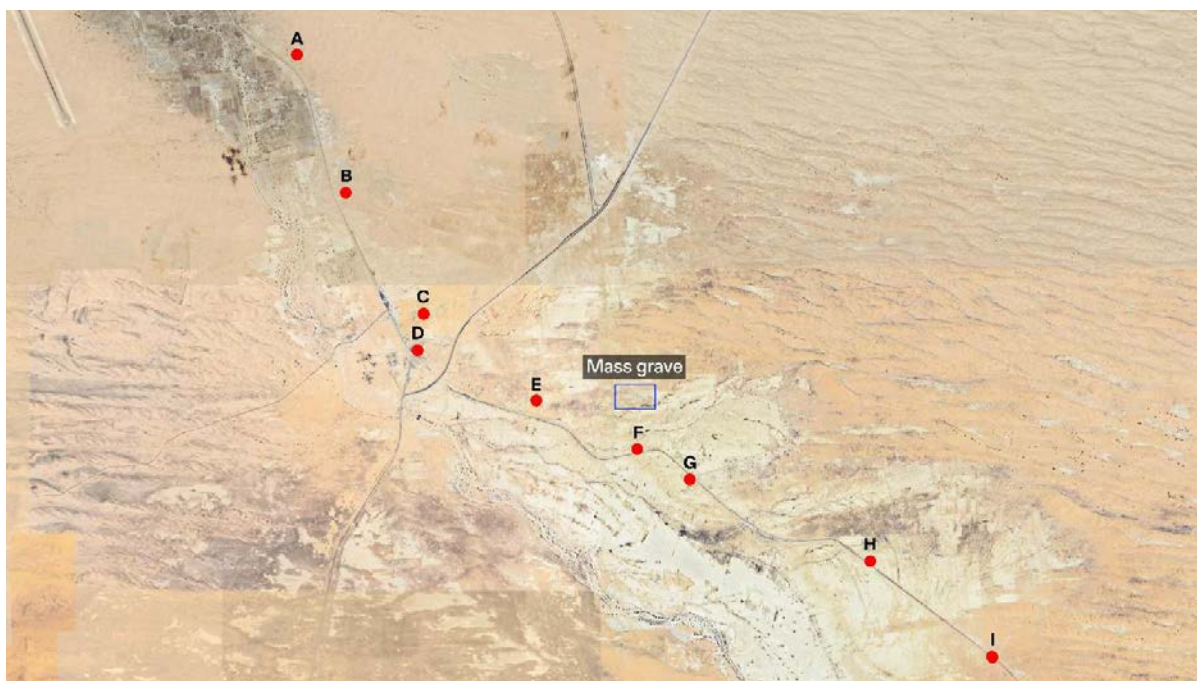


Figure 5: Satellite imagery showing military outposts along the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway near the location of the mass grave.

36. Outposts C, D, F, G, and H are all first visible in imagery dated 25 January 2015, B appears in the 14 June 2015 image; A is visible in imagery dated 29 November 2015; while outposts E and I first appear in satellite imagery from 15 June 2016.

37.

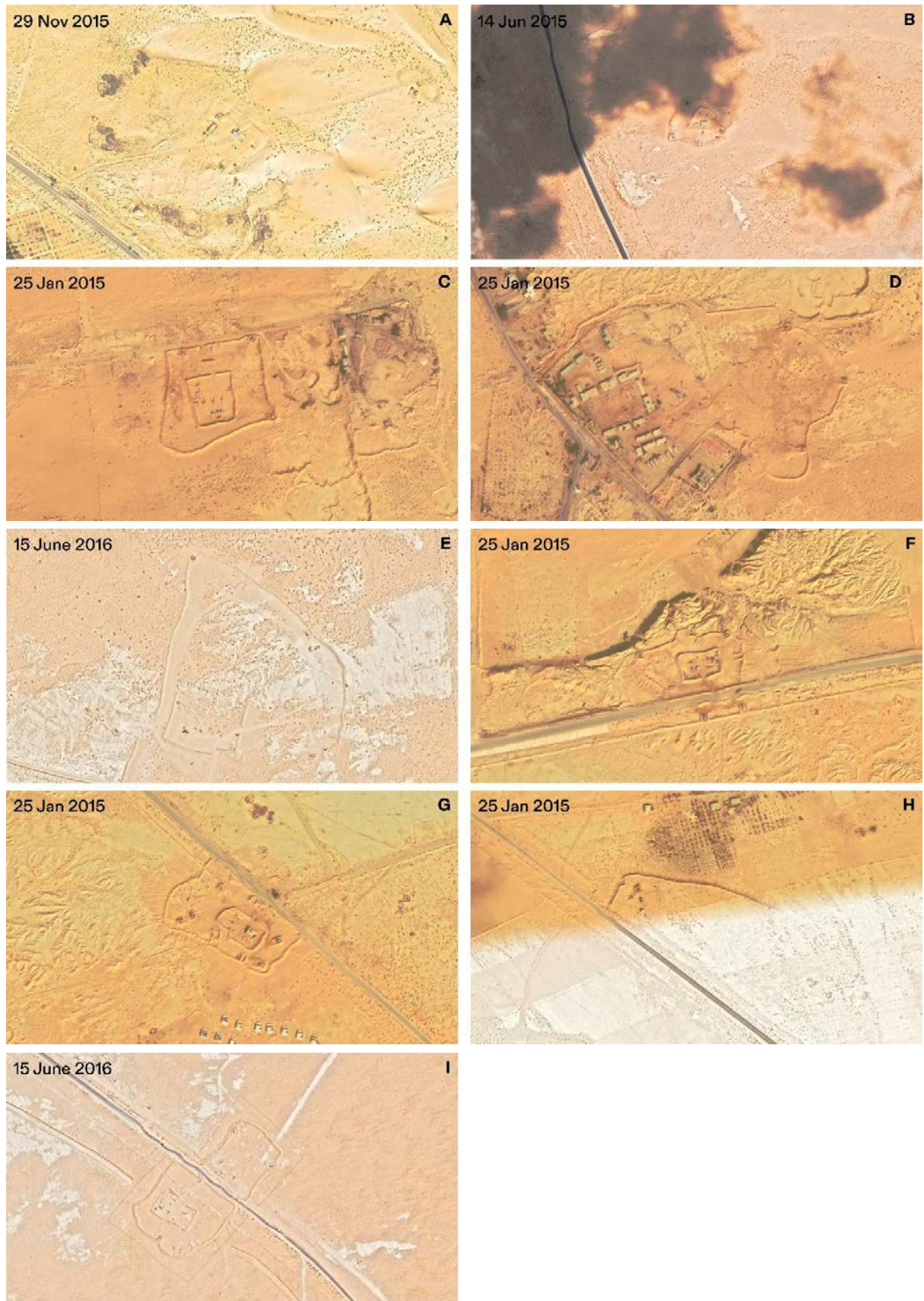
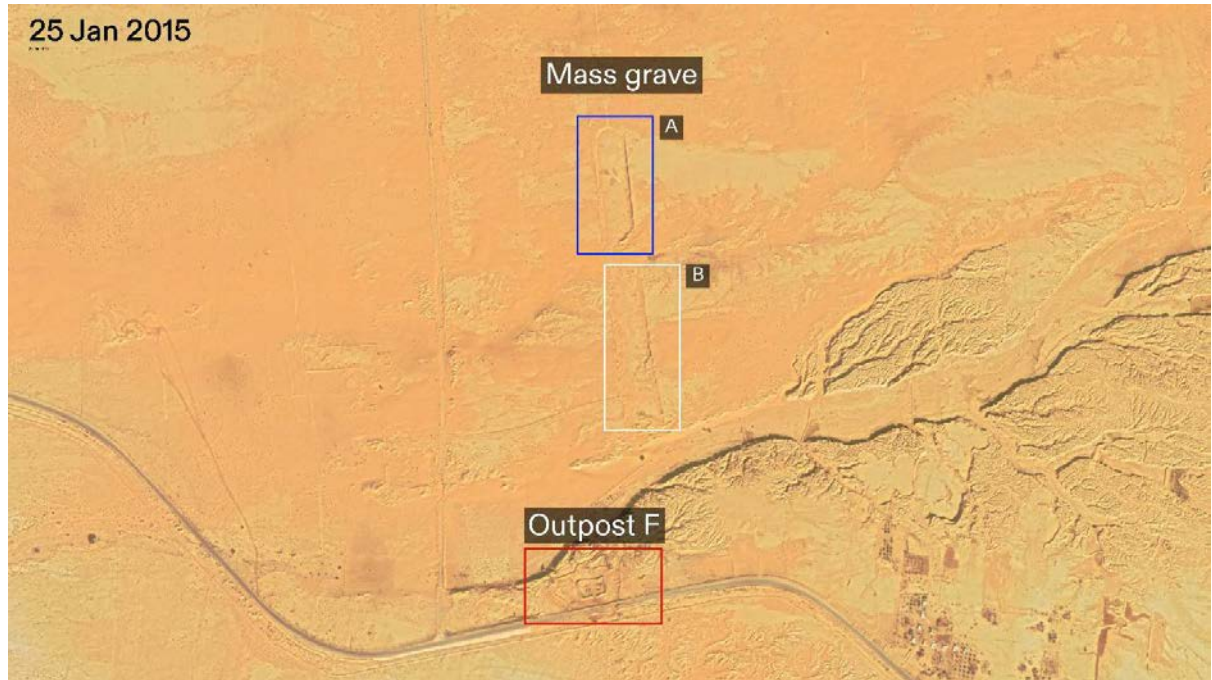


Figure 6: Satellite imagery showing military outposts positioned along the Abu Aweigila–Al-Arish highway near the location of the mass grave. A, B, C, D, F, G, H appear for the first time on a satellite image dated 2015. While E and I first appear in 2016.





38.

Figure 7: Satellite image dated 25 January 2015, showing military outpost F, approximately 750 m away from the entrance of Pit A, and 400 m away from the entrance of Pit B.

39. The closest outpost to the mass grave site, F, is less than 1km away (Figure 7).
40. In addition, we observe in satellite imagery dated 15 June 2016 (Figure 8) that Outposts C, D, E, and F form are connected by sand trenches (in black) on the northern side of the highway. Similarly, Outposts F, G, H, and I are connected by sand trenches on the southern side of the highway. These appear to be designed to conceal activity and facilitate military movements.

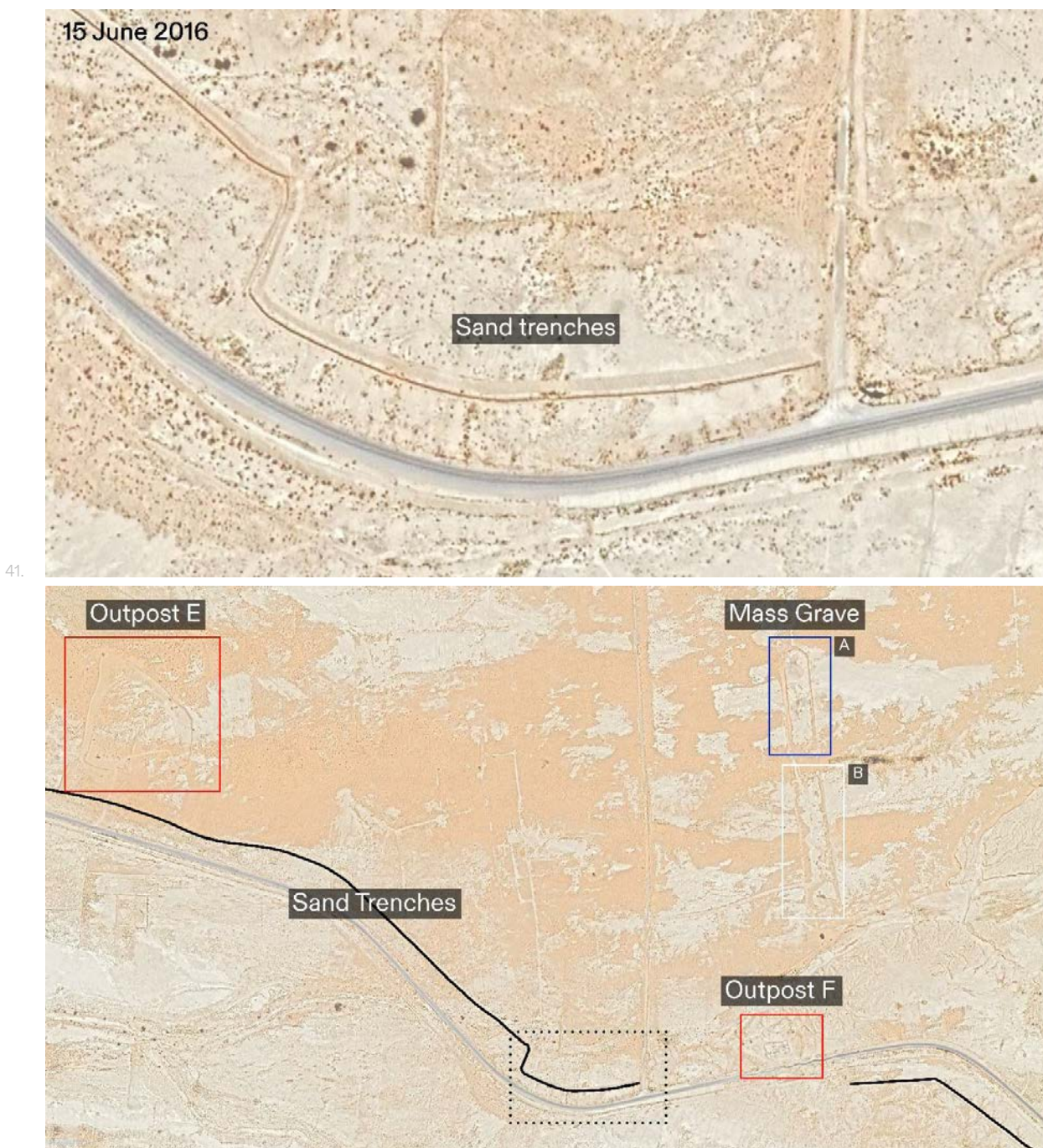


Figure 8: Satellite image dated 15 June 2016 showing sand trenches connecting two of the outposts closest to the mass grave site.

42. Satellite imagery dated 25 January 2015 (Figure 9) also shows sand barriers along the road east of the mass grave site. These are typically used to control movement by reducing vehicle speed or blocking roads, a practice commonly observed near military outposts in Sinai.



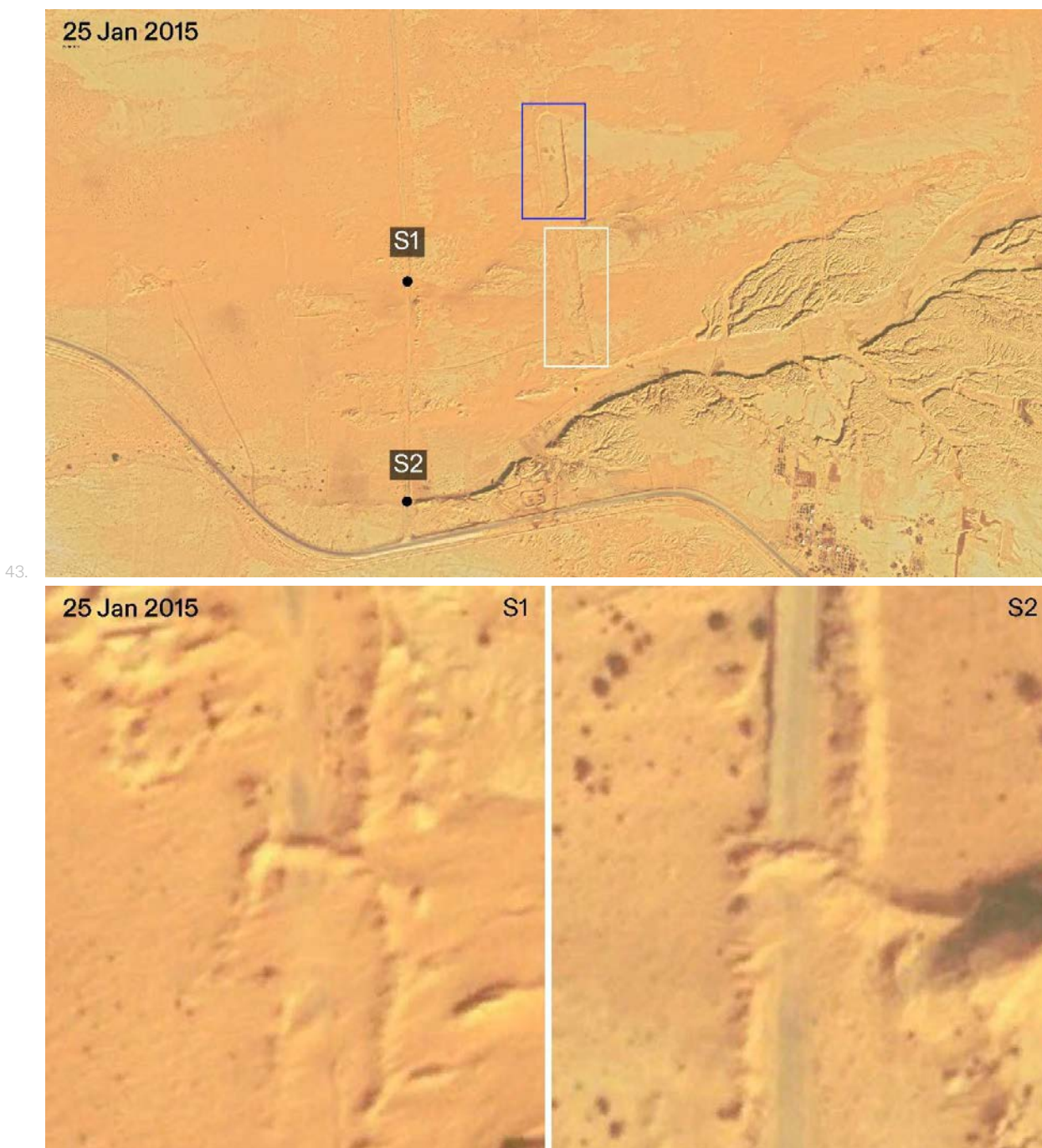


Figure 9: Satellite image dated 25 January 2015, showing the location of the sand barriers.

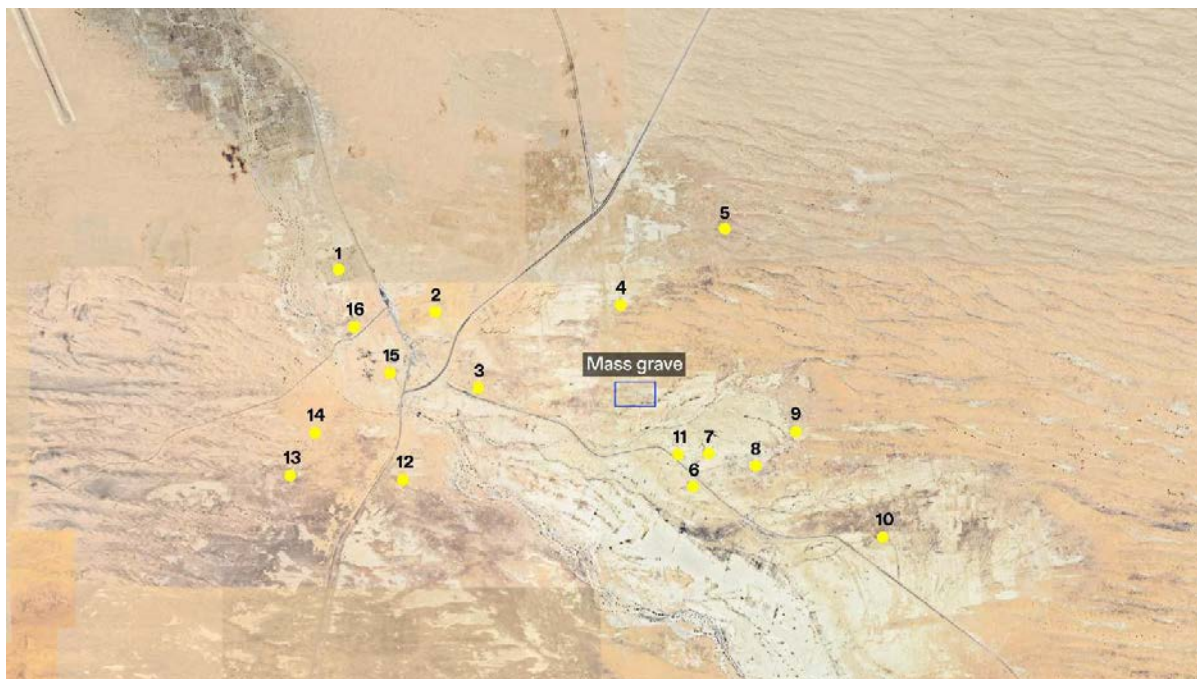
44. Taken together, this configuration not only highlights the heightened security measures and increased militarisation in the vicinity of the mass grave but also suggests that access to the site is significantly restricted for non-military vehicles.
45. This conclusion aligns with observations made by SFHR during their visits to the site. According to the experience of SFHR researchers, access to the site is extremely difficult for locals, and entails significant security concerns.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'Summary of the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' Observations of the alleged mass grave site East of al-Arish, 3- Access Constraints <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>



## 2. Destruction of Infrastructure 2013 - 2020

46. Additionally, satellite imagery analysis shows that within the same 8km radius, we find evidence of destruction of buildings, including civilian infrastructure, between 2013 and 2018.



47.

Figure 10: Satellite image showing the location of infrastructure destruction between 2013 and 2020, in the vicinity of the mass grave.

48. Specifically, location 1 was destroyed between 13 October 2013 and 14 June 2015. Locations 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 were destroyed sometime between 25 January 2015 and 15 June 2016. Location 2 was flattened between 25 January 2015 and 26 August 2016. Locations 11- 14 were destroyed between 14 June 2015 and 15 June 2016. Location 15 was destroyed between 19 June 2016 and 26 August 2016. Finally, destruction at Locations 4 and 5 occurred sometime between 4 December 2017 and 6 June 2018. Location 16 was destroyed between 20 June 2019 and 15 March 2020.

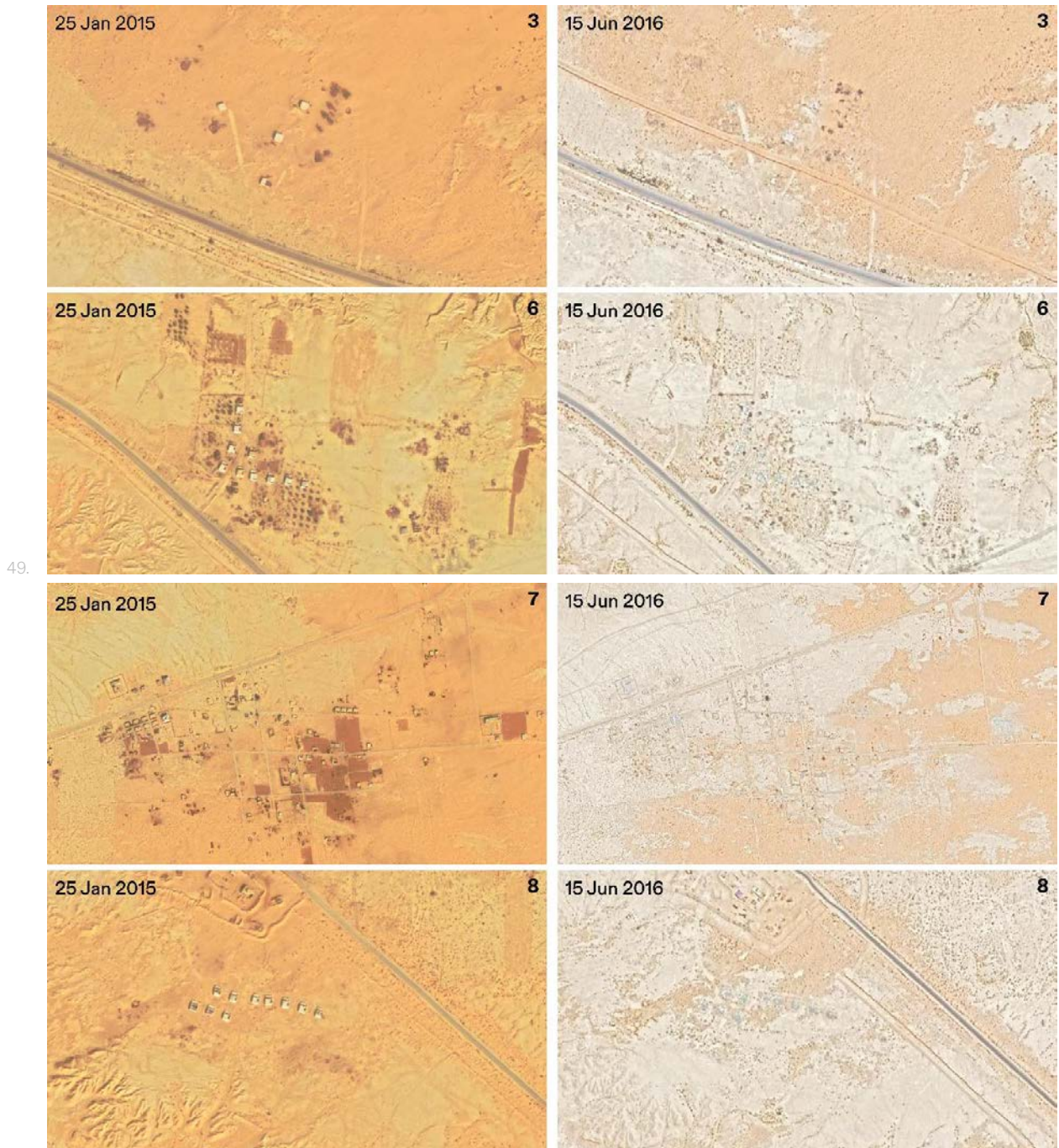


Figure 11: side by side comparison of satellite imagery dated 25 Jan 2015, and 15 June 2016, showing the destruction of infrastructure at location 3, 6, 7, and 8 on figure 4.



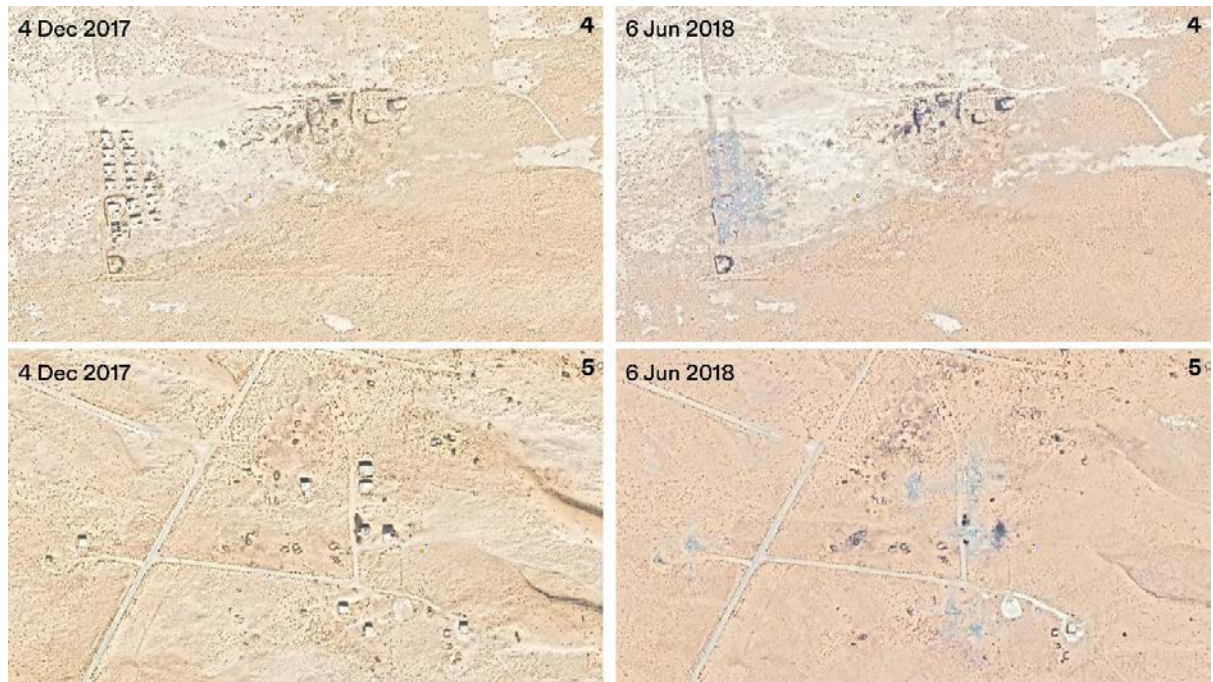


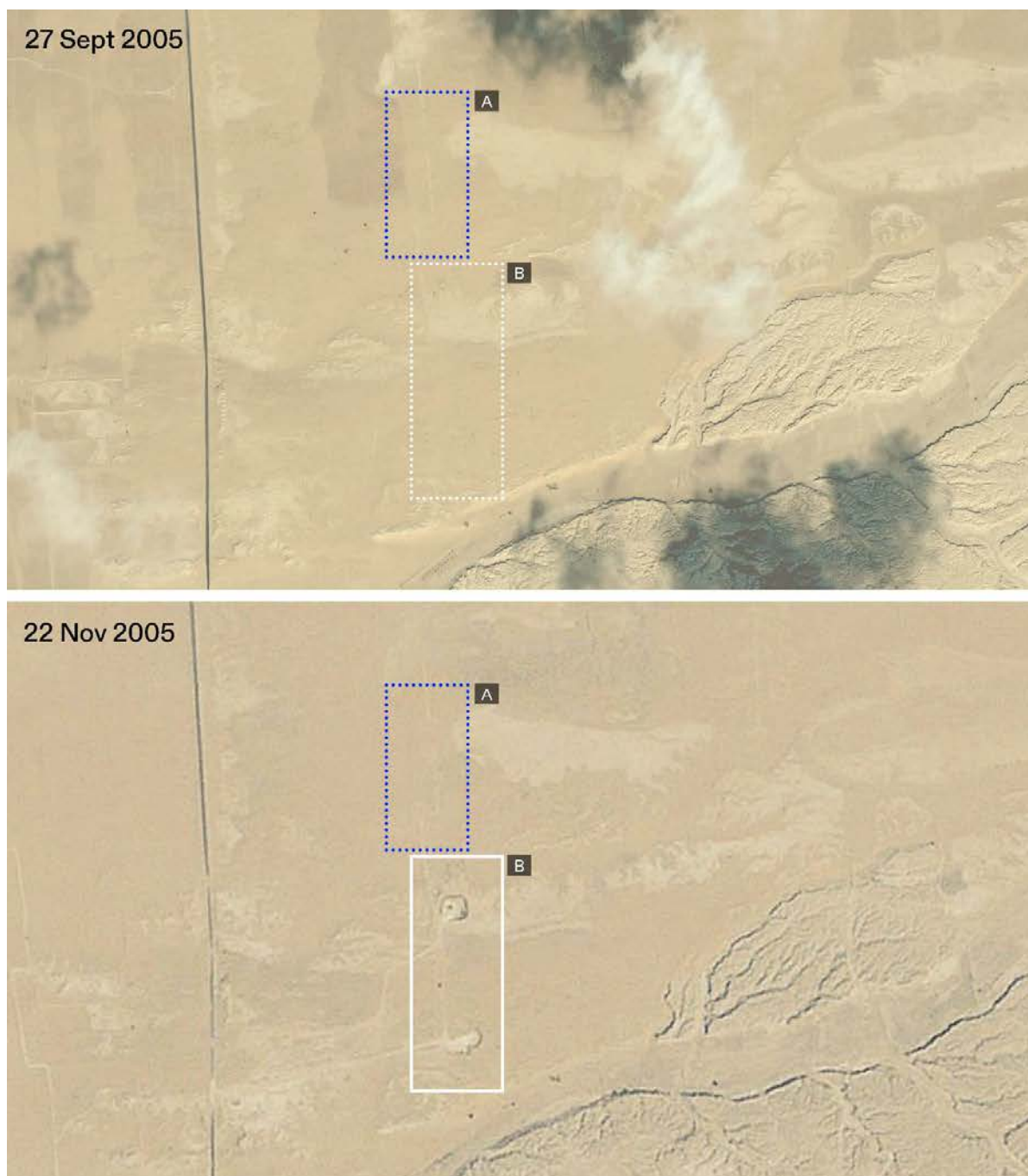
Figure 12: side-by-side comparison of satellite imagery dated 4 December 2017, and 6 June 2018, showing the destruction of infrastructure at locations 4 and 5 on Figure 4.

### 3. *Timeline of use of the mass grave 2005 - 2023*

51. The satellite image dated 27 September 2005 (Figure 13), shows no visible signs of the mass grave site. By 22 November 2005, the first signs of disturbance are visible with two excavated areas appearing in Pit B (In white below).

52.





53.

Figure 13: First signs of excavation in Pit B (in white) occurred between 27 Sept and 22 Nov 2005.

54. The subsequent image dated 20 February 2010 (Figure 15), shows the mass grave site in a form largely consistent with its present-day appearance. A few limited track marks are visible, primarily near the entrance to Pit A, and in the northern part of Pit B. Signs of soil excavation are also apparent in Pit B.
55. According to SFHR researchers, until 2010 local residents extracted clay from the site to fertilize agricultural soil in the surrounding area, a practice which resulted in the formation of these pits.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'VI Mass Graves: How the Evidence Emerged' <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>



Figure 14: Pit A and B: 20 February 2010.



Figure 15: Pit A: Track marks visible at the pit entrance. 20 February 2010.



20 Feb 2010

B



58.

Figure 16: Pit B: Track marks and ground disturbance visible on 20 February 2010.

59. Satellite images dated 10 October 2011, 29 August 2013 and 25 January 2015 (Figure 17), show no significant changes in the shape of the pits. The track marks are still visible.

10 Oct 2011

29 Aug 2013

25 Jan 2015



60.

Figure 17: Pit A: 10 October 2011, 29 August 2013, 25 January 2015.



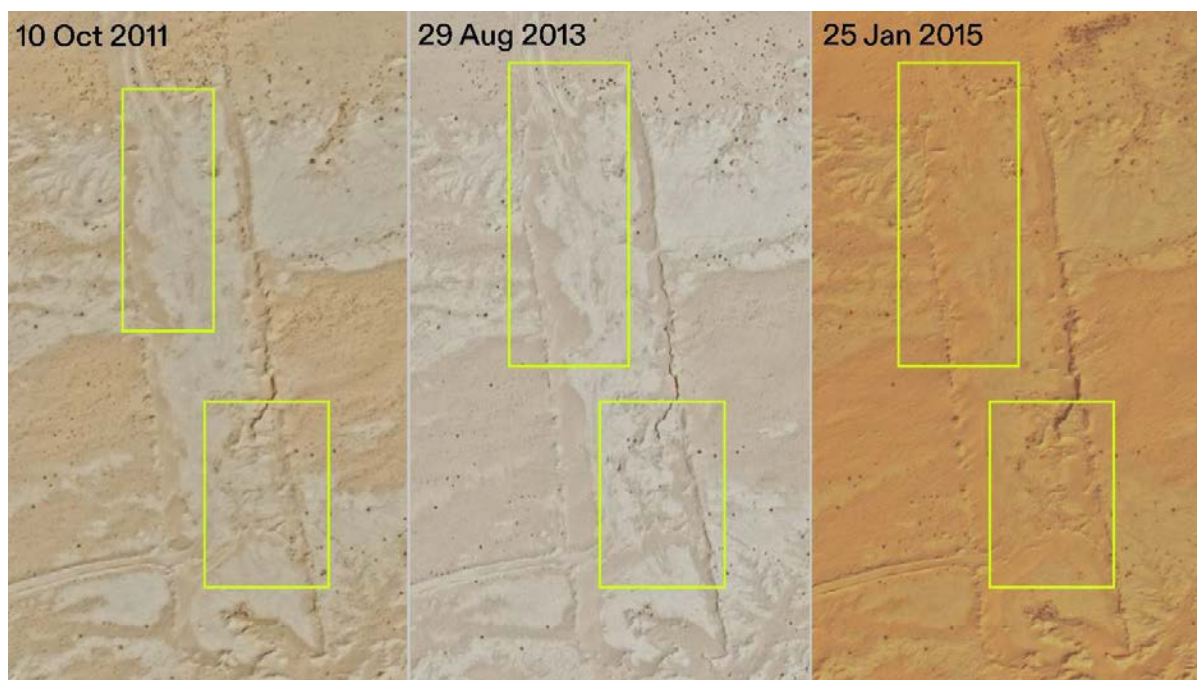


Figure 18: Pit B: 10 October 2011, 29 August 2013, 25 January 2015.

- 61.
- 62.
63. The satellite image dated 14 June 2015 (Figure 19), shows a large number of track marks within Pit A, each measuring approximately 2 m in width (centre to centre) and relatively uniform in appearance. Several of the tracks converge at the entrance of Pit A, suggesting repeated use of the same access route. Similar track marks are also visible in Pit B (Figure 20), extending and connecting with the access road located to the west of the pit.
64. This suggests that there was activity at the site at some point between 25 January 2015 and 14 June 2015.



65.

Figure 19: Pit A: 14 June 2015.

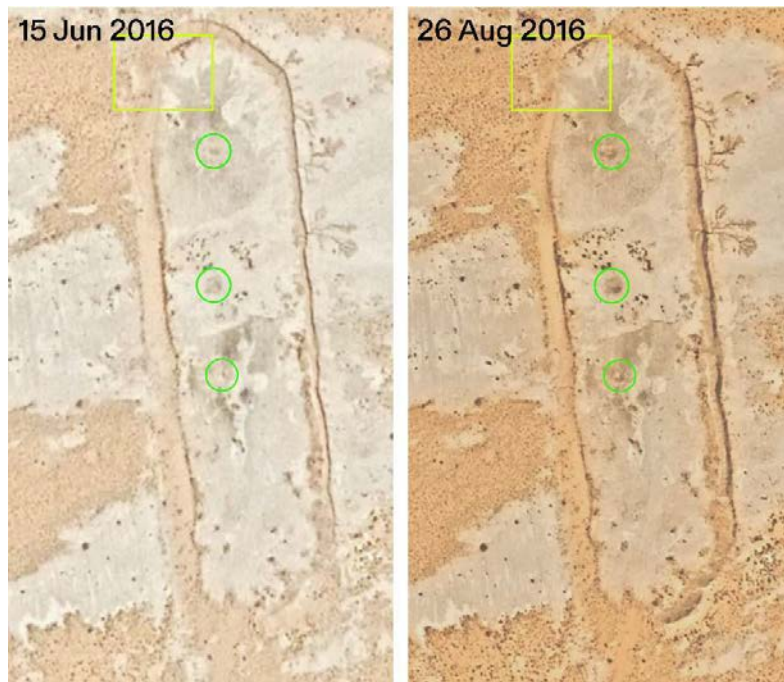


66.

Figure 20: Pit B: 14 June 2015.

67. The satellite image dated 15 June 2016 (Figure 21), shows signs of earth flattening in the northern part of Pit A, suggesting the creation of a possible new access path into the site. The track marks visible on the 14 June 2015 image have disappeared, and no new track marks are detectable in the 2016 image. The same image also reveals possible traces of three craters, below in green, located in the northern and central parts of Pit A. The satellite image dated 26 August 2016 clearly shows the traces of the three craters. No other significant changes are visible.





68.

Figure 21: Pit A: 15 June and 26 Aug 2016.

69. The satellite image dated 28 November 2016 (Figure 22), shows a track mark on the southwest side, outside of Pit A.



70.

Figure 22: Pit A: 28 November 2016.

71. The satellite image dated 3 February 2017 (Figure 23), shows multiple track marks on the eastern side, outside of Pit A.





72.

Figure 23: Pit A: 3 February 2017. © Apollo

73. The satellite image dated 2 June 2017 (Figure 24), shows new track marks in Pit A, leading toward the northernmost crater as well as around the two other craters. Additional track marks are visible outside Pit A and B, on the western and southern sides. All tracks are approximately 2 m in width and relatively uniform in appearance.



74.

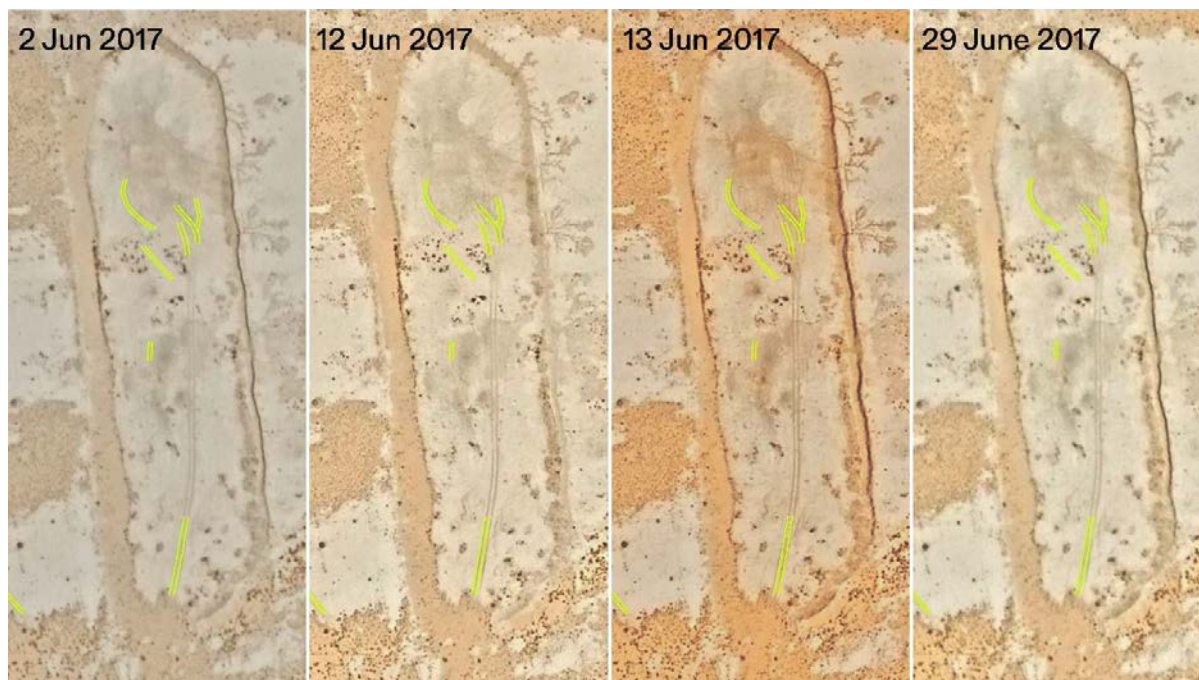
Figure 24: Pit A: June 2, 2017.



75.

Figure 25: Pit B: June 2, 2017.

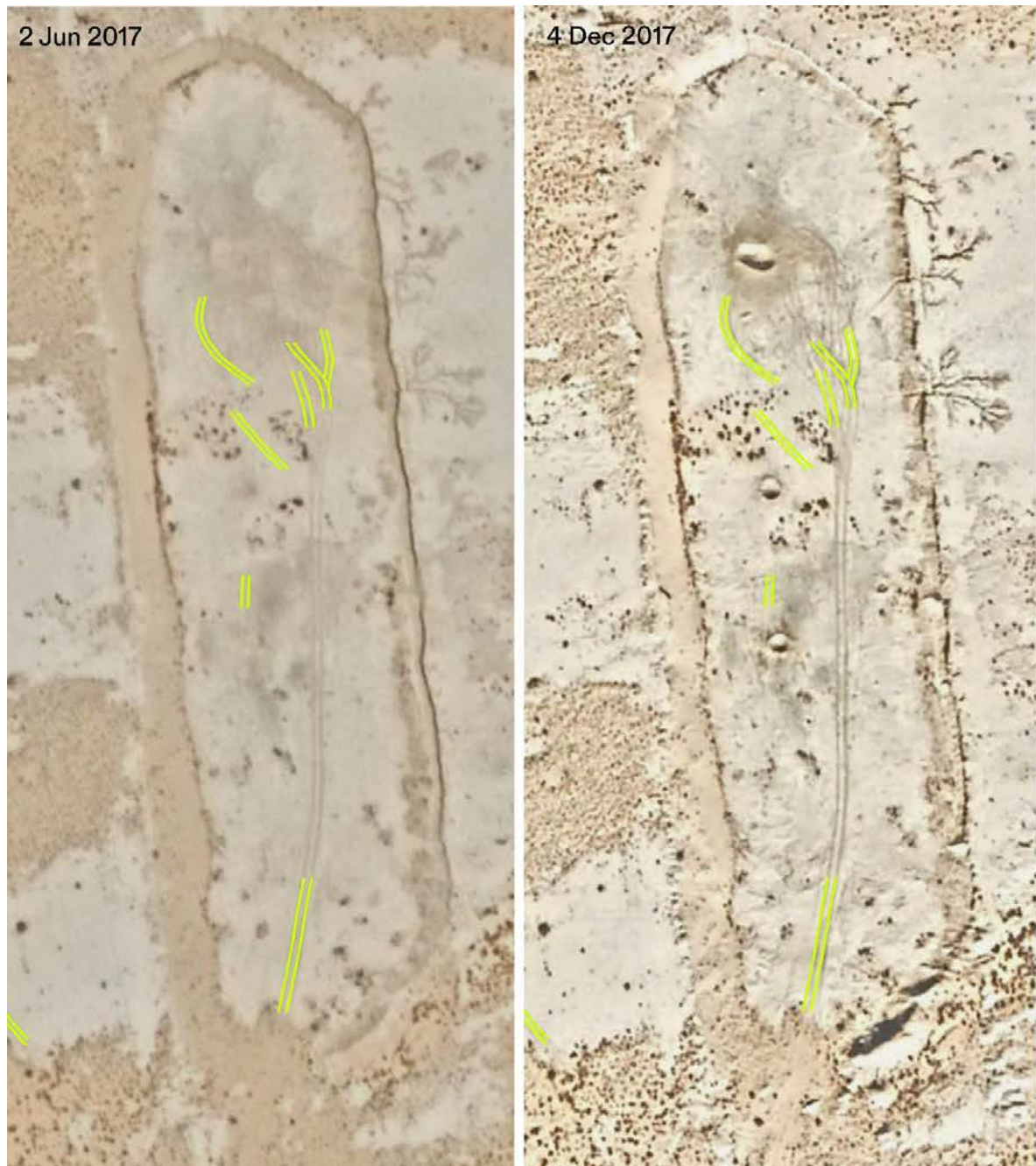
76. No further changes are detected in the satellite images dated 12 June, 13 June, 29 June and 4 December 2017 (Figure 26, 27). The track marks remain intact throughout this period, suggesting that there was likely little to no activity at the site between 2 June and 4 December 2017 (Figure 27).



77.

Figure 26: Pit A: 2 June, 12 June, 13 June, and 29 June, and 2017.





78.

Figure 27: Side by side close-up comparison of pit A: 2 June 2017 and 4 December 2017.

79. In the satellite image dated 6 June 2018 (Figure 28), the previous track marks have disappeared. However, a new track mark is visible in between Pit A and B.





80.

Figure 28: 6 Pit B: June 2018.

81. Satellite imagery from 12 December 2018 to 10 November 2021 (Figure 29) does not provide additional resolution to the timeline of activity at the mass grave; no ground disturbances are detected.

82.

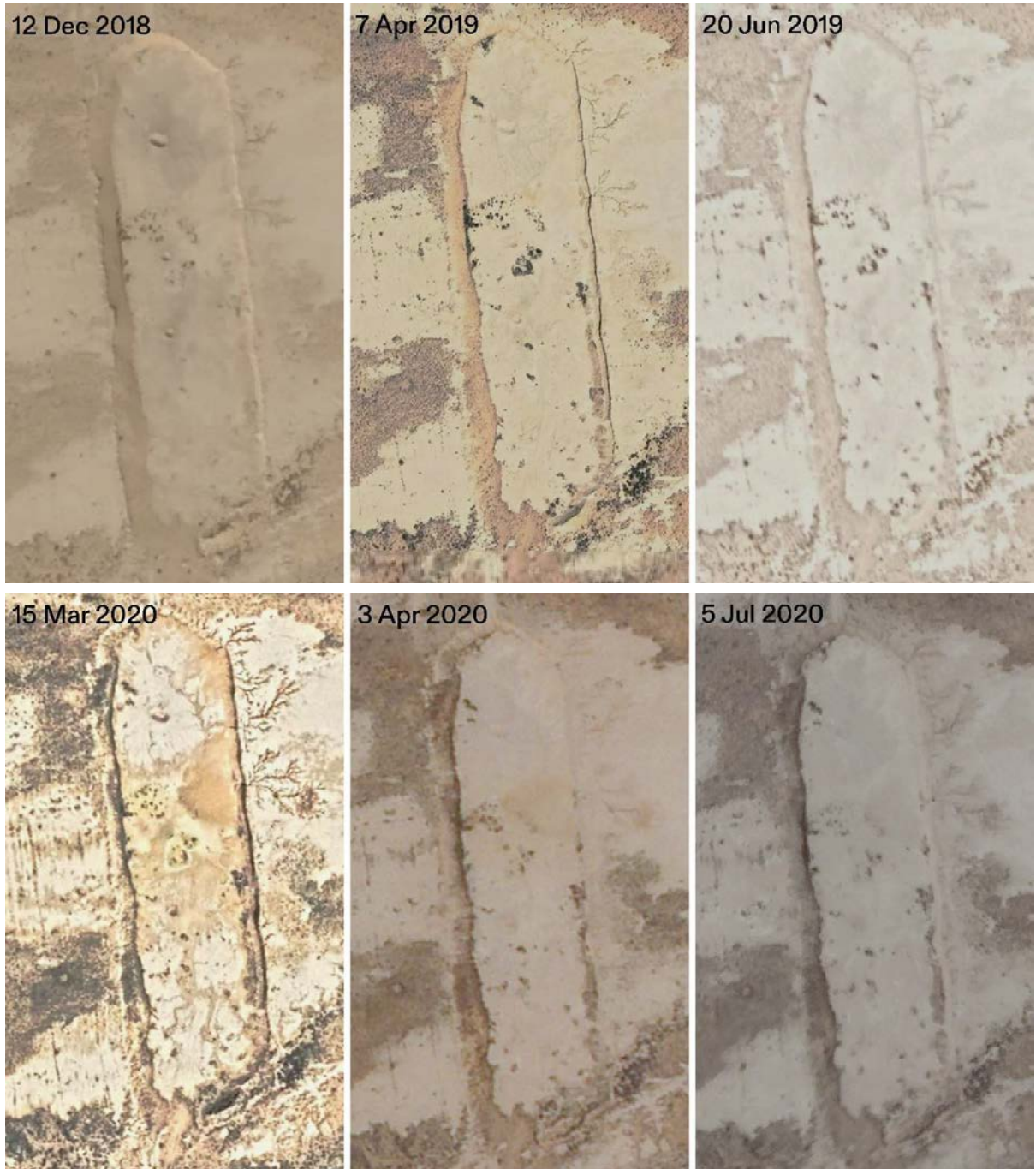






Figure 29: Pit A: 12 December 2018 to 10 November 2021.

83. In the satellite image dated 18 July 2023 (Figure 30), new track marks are visible on the eastern side of the pit A, and on the western side of Pit B as well as in Pit B.



84.

Figure 30: Pit A: 18 July 2023.





85.

Figure 31: Pit B: 18 July 2023.

86. Between 2010–2023, we documented several periods of ground activity in and around both pits. Prior to 2015, the activity at the site is minimal. The most significant activity, marked by multiple vehicle tracks directly within the pits, took place between January 2015 and June 2017.
87. The timing of this activity coincides with the peak of armed clashes in Sinai and a broader escalation of the conflict (2015–2017). Incidents reported by Human Rights Watch<sup>11</sup> and Amnesty International<sup>12</sup> fall within this period, illustrating the intensification. Notably, this timeframe aligns with testimonies collected by SFHR regarding extrajudicial killings at this site during this period.<sup>13</sup>
88. The military imposed curfews,<sup>14</sup> beginning in October 2014,<sup>15</sup> and lasting in effect until October 2021, which severely restricted civilian movement. This makes it unlikely that the activity observed at the site during this time was carried out by civilians.

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Egypt: Possible Extrajudicial Killings in Sinai', March 16, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/16/egypt-possible-extrajudicial-killings-sinai>.

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International, 'Egypt: Video of extrajudicial executions offers glimpse of hidden abuses by the military in North Sinai', April 21, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/04/egypt-video-of-extrajudicial-executions-offers-glimpse-of-hidden-abuses-by-the-military-in-north-sinai/>

<sup>13</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'VI Mass Graves: How the Evidence Emerged' <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>

<sup>14</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 'Presidential Decree 442/2021: Perpetuating the State of Emergency in North Sinai', October 6, 2021, <https://sinaifhr.org/show/103>.

<sup>15</sup> Mada Masr, 'Curfew and state of emergency in North Sinai follows deadly attacks', October 25, 2014, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/10/25/news/u/curfew-and-state-of-emergency-in-north-sinai-follows-deadly-attacks/>.

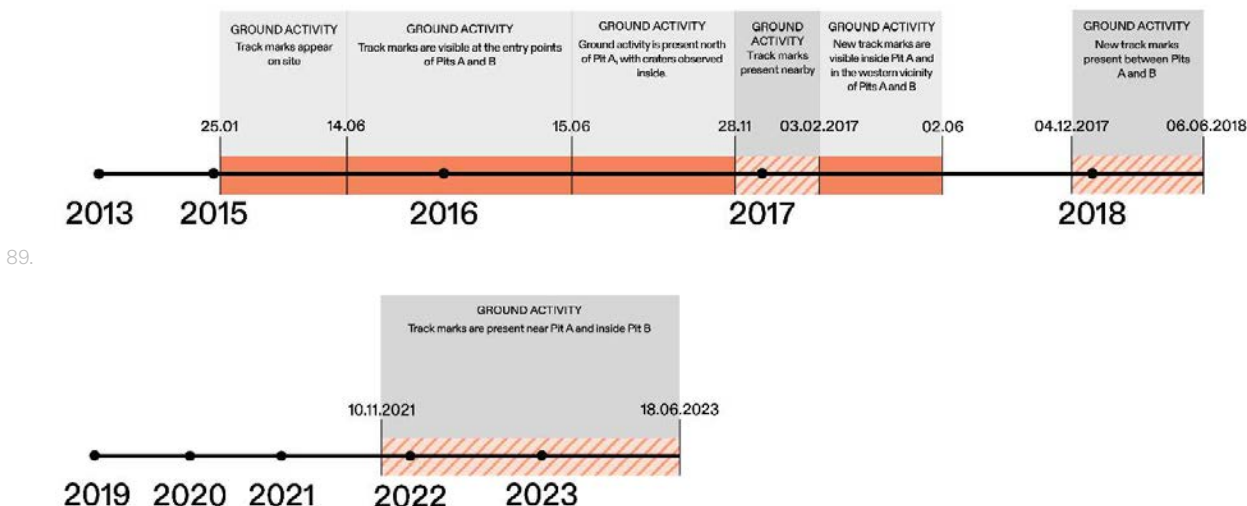
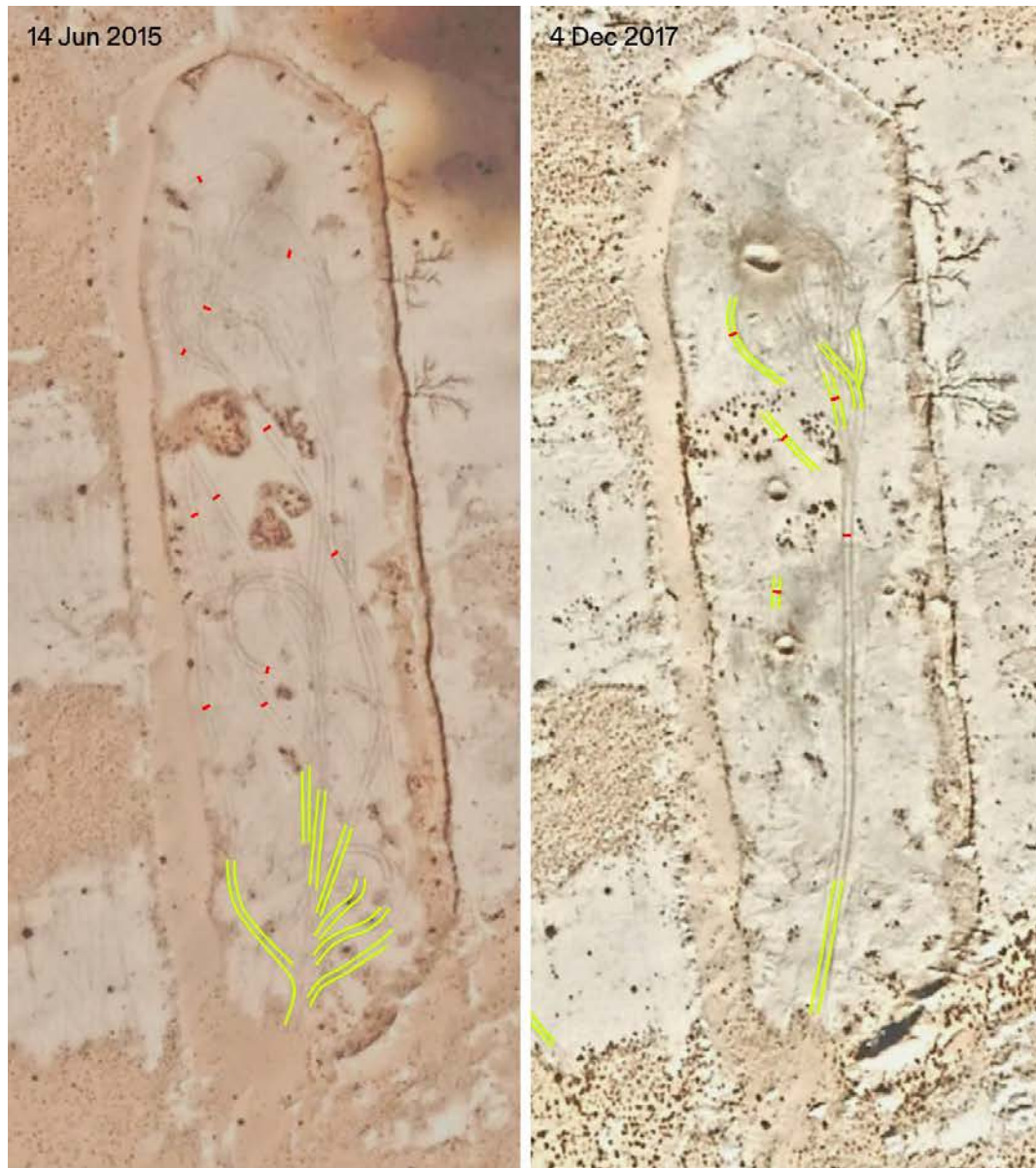


Figure 32: Timeline of ground activity in and around the mass grave site 2013 – 2023

90. It is important to note that while the appearance of track marks suggests activity in the pit, the absence of such marks does not necessarily indicate a lack of activity. Multiple factors, including the resolution of the satellite imagery and environmental conditions at the site (e.g., soil compactness or humidity), may contribute to the absence of visible evidence.

## E. TIRE/TRACK MARK ANALYSIS

91. To determine the size of the track marks, we measured multiple points across the 14 June 2015 and 4 December 2017 images, including both outer edge-to-outer edge and centre-to-centre distances at various locations. On average, the distance between the central axes of the left and right tires or tracks is approximately 2 meters or less, while the full lateral extent of the tire or track imprints on the ground can reach up to 2.5 meters.
92. It is important to note that there are limitations in measurement precision due to the image resolution.



93.

Figure 33: 14 Satellite images from June 2015 and 4 December 2017 showing the presence of track marks.

94. When comparing these track marks to those left by military vehicles in a nearby outpost, we observed that the former are smaller. On average, the centre-to-centre distance between the tracks of large military vehicles visible on the 25 Jan 2015 satellite imagery below (Figure 34) is at least 2.70m while the full extent imprint can reach up to 3.4m.



95.



Figure 34: Satellite image from January 25, 2015 of outpost C (top) and outpost F (bottom), showing track marks likely left by large military vehicles. The track spacing is measured from centre to centre.

96. According to data collected by researchers at SFHR, several types of military vehicles have been deployed during the military operations in Sinai. These include the Humvee, Cougar 6x6 MRAP, Fahd Armored Personnel Carrier, M2A2 ODS Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, Toyota Hilux, Toyota Land Cruiser, and T-62 or T-55 tanks.
97. Using available technical specifications for each of these vehicles (known in shown in blue, estimated in orange), we estimated the tire or track mark width, from centre to centre and from outer edge to outer edge.

98. These estimations are as follows:

Specification	Humvee M1151  M998, M1038, M1043, and M996 (smaller)	Cougar 6x6 MRAP	FAPC 240 IFV	M2A2 ODS (Bradley IFV)	T-62 or T-55 Tanks	Toyota Hilux/	Toyota Land Cruiser
Vehicle type	Wheeled 4x4	Wheeled 6x6	Wheeled 4x4	Tracked IFV	Tracked MBT	Wheeled 4x4 pickup	Wheeled 4x4
Vehicle length	4.93 m	7.52 m	6 m	6.55 m	6.63 m	5.325 m	4.925 m
Vehicle width	2.31 m	2.71 m	2.45 m	3.28 m	3.56 m	1.80 m	1.98 m
Tire width	3.175 m	3.95 m	unknown	unknown	unknown	2.65 m	
Turning Radius	7.62 m	8.08 m min (based on the 4x4)	Unknown	Can perform pivot turn	Can perform pivot turn	6.20 m to 6.4 m	6 to 6.4 m
Tire track width (centre to centre)	1.82 m	2.3 m (back wheels)	Approx 1.9 to 1.95 m	Approx 2.60 m	Approx 2.74m	1.50 m	1.664 - 1.668 m
Tire track width (outer edge to edge)	2.1375 m	2.71 cm (vehicle width)	Approx 2.2 - 2.30 m	Approx 3.1 - 3.2 m	Approx 3.3 - 3.4 m	1.765 m	
Number of wheels/tracks	2 wheels /side	3 wheels / side	2 wheels / side	Continuous track	Continuous track	2 wheels/ side	2 wheels/ side

99. According to these estimations, the track marks visible in the 14 June 2015 and 4 December 2017 satellite images, are slightly smaller than those typically produced by tracked vehicles such as the M2A2 ODS or T-62/T-55 tanks. Additionally, although these vehicles are capable of curved movement, they more commonly perform pivot turns, which contrasts with the curved track patterns observed in the imagery.
100. Given the margin of error, the track marks are likely more consistent in size with those produced by a Humvee M1151, Cougar 6x6 MRAP, Toyota Hilux, or Toyota Land Cruiser.
101. In addition, we measured the three smallest turning circles visible in the 14 June satellite image, estimating the smallest radius, from the outer edge tire track marks, to be approximately 5.8 meters. According to the specifications in the table above, the Toyota Hilux or Toyota Land Cruiser would be capable of executing these turns.



Figure 35: measuring the turning circle radius in the northernmost part of Pit A, 14 June 2015

103. The 14 June 2015 satellite image, however, also shows marks with wider turning circles in other areas of the site and therefore does not exclude the possible presence of other vehicles.
104. This satellite imagery study has several limitations, including constraints in the available technical data, the potential for vehicle modifications, the repeated use of specific paths, and the limited resolution of the satellite imagery, which introduces a margin of error in all spatial measurements.
105. Videos gathered and verified by the SFHR team<sup>16</sup>, indicate that the military employs car models such as the Toyota Hilux and Land Cruisers, as well as Humvees<sup>17 18</sup>. For example, a leaked video from 2017, verified by both Human Rights Watch and SFHR, shows Egyptian-affiliated militias using a Humvee at an unidentified site of extrajudicial executions in North Sinai.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 'Again... Videos Show Extrajudicial Executions in Sinai by the Military and Its Collaborators', August 20, 2022, <https://sinaifhr.org/show/147>

<sup>17</sup> Union of Sinai Tribes, 'Operation Sinai Dawn: Special Operation Against Extremist Terrorist Elements in Sinai', official website, June 6, 2022, <https://www.sinaitribes.com/videos/%d8%b9%d9%85%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%81%d8%ac%d8%b1-%d8%b3%d9%8a%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d9%88%d8%b9%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%89-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%b5%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84/> (accessed September 9, 2025).

<sup>18</sup> Amnesty International, 'Egypt: Video of extrajudicial executions offers glimpse of hidden abuses by the military in North Sinai', April 21, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/04/egypt-video-of-extrajudicial-executions-offers-glimpse-of-hidden-abuses-by-the-military-in-north-sinai/>

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Egypt: Videos Show Army Executions in Sinai', April 21, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/21/egypt-videos-show-army-executions-sinai>



## F. SITE RECONSTRUCTION

106. Researchers from SFHR conducted two site visits to the mass grave in December 2023 and January 2024. Due to the proximity of nearby military outposts, accessing the site posed security concerns to researchers, such as the risk of arrest. As a result, the team was only able to examine Pit A, while their examination of Pit B was limited to visual observations from a distance.<sup>20</sup>
107. In Pit A, the team captured video footage documenting skeletal remains, including skulls, some of which appear to have been blindfolded. Also visible in the footage are clothing and sandals, which appear to be civilian in nature. This evidence corresponds to the contents of leaked videos of extrajudicial killing in the region<sup>21 22</sup>, which have previously been verified by SFHR.<sup>23</sup> In those videos, detainees commonly appear in civilian clothes, blindfolded, and sometimes with their hands tied behind their backs.
108. In addition to documenting visible remains at the surface, the team conducted shallow excavations in Pit A, through which they uncovered dozens more skeletal remains below the soil surface.
109. In Pit B, from a distance, the team observed skeletal remains and civilian clothing, suggesting additional burials at this location.

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<sup>20</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'Summary of the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' Observations of the alleged mass grave site East of al-Arish. <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International, 'Egypt: Video of extrajudicial executions offers glimpse of hidden abuses by the military in North Sinai', April 21, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/04/egypt-video-of-extrajudicial-executions-offers-glimpse-of-hidden-abuses-by-the-military-in-north-sinai/>.

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Egypt: Videos Show Army Executions in Sinai', April 21, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/21/egypt-videos-show-army-executions-sinai>.

<sup>23</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 'Again.. Videos show extrajudicial executions in Sinai by the military and its collaborators', August 21, 2022, <https://sinaifhr.org/show/148>.



Figure 36: Site reconstruction of the northernmost crater in the mass grave

111. Using images collected during these visits, we reconstructed Pit A in as a 3D digital environment, including a photogrammetry model of the northernmost crater (Figure 36).
112. Within the 3D space we cross-referenced various pieces of media evidence to map the locations of remains (Figure 38).

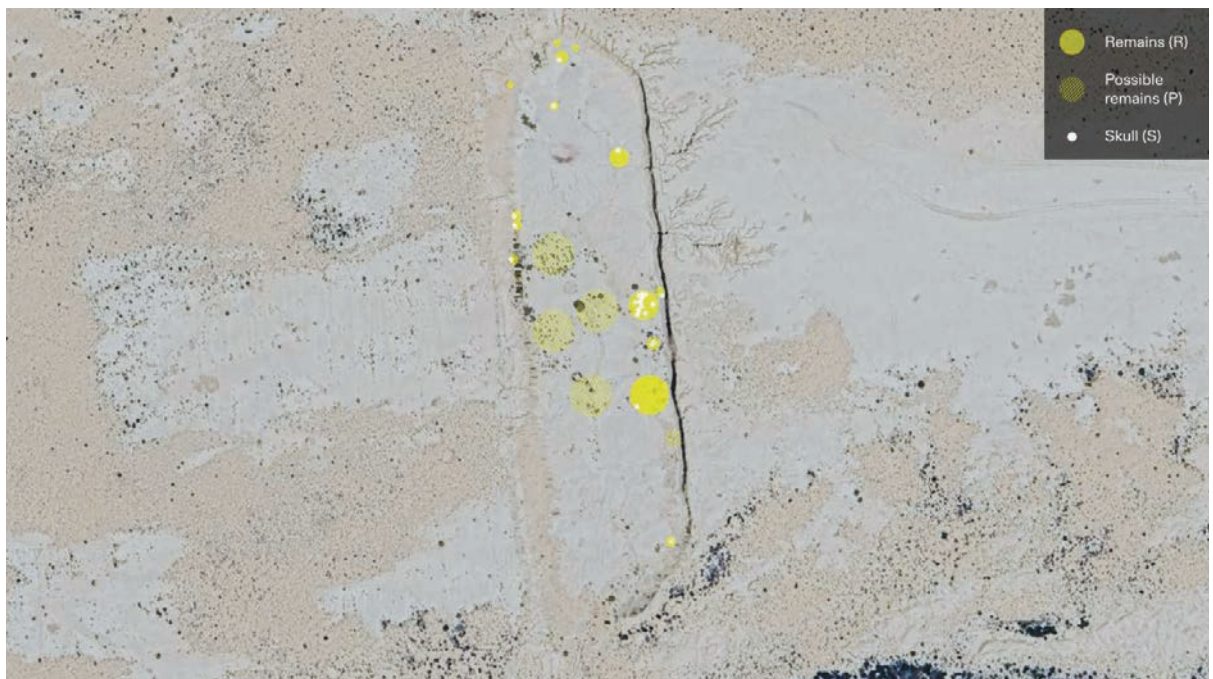


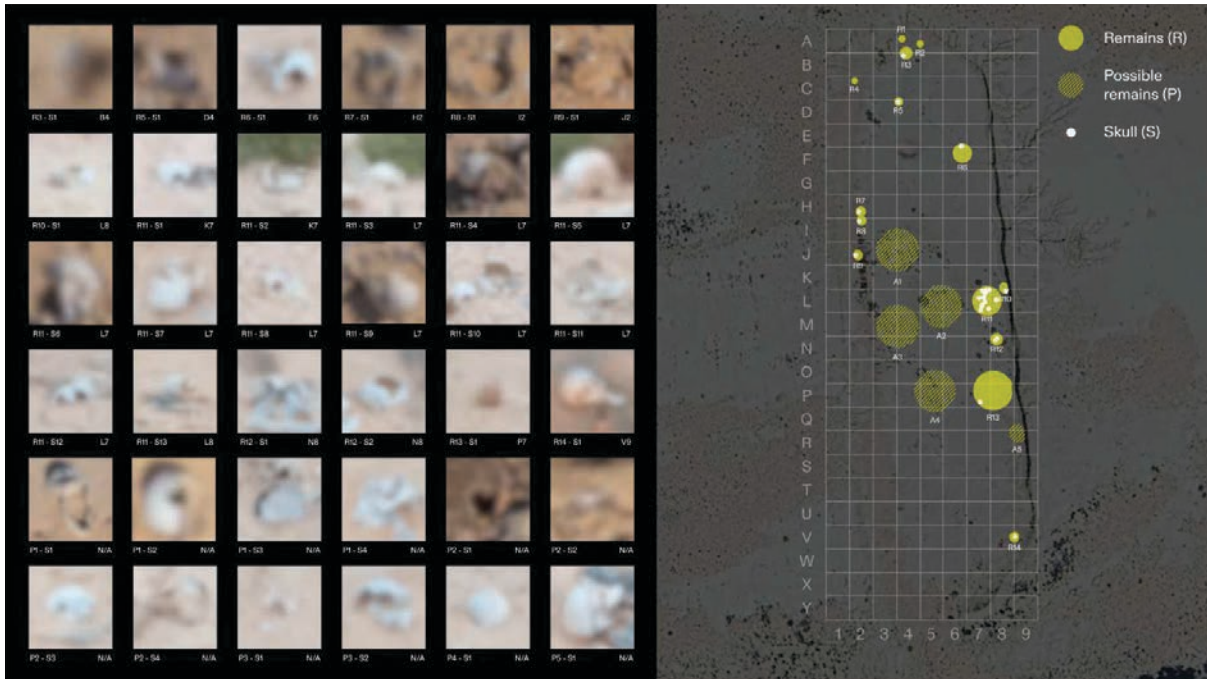
Figure 37: Map showing the location of human remains at the mass grave site at the time of the visit.



114.

Figure 38: Using 3D digital reconstruction, we can precisely locate the human remains found at the mass grave site. Skull S1 is visible here in white and remains R2 and R3 in yellow.

115. The analysis shows remains buried in shallow earth, widely dispersed across the site (Figure 37). It also revealed the presence of at least 36 skulls (Figure 39) suggesting that at least this number of individuals were buried in Pit A.



116.

Figure 39: location of skulls found at the mass grave site.





Figure 40: zoomed-in view of Remains 11, showing detailed positions of Skulls 1 to 13.

118. Media evidence confirmed the presence of 36 skulls in Pit A. However, due to security concerns, documentation at Pit A was hurried, and could not be comprehensive, while Pit B was not documented by media evidence at all, and no sub-surface excavation was possible<sup>24</sup>. It is therefore very likely that there are more than 36 individuals buried at the site<sup>25</sup>.

## G. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

119. We observe a general militarisation of the area surrounding the mass grave between 2013 and 2016 (see Section D1.1), marked by the emergence of several military outposts, some in close proximity to the site and connected by sand trenches and other earthworks along the highway. This development is accompanied by the destruction of civilian infrastructure (see section D1.2) and the imposition of strict curfews<sup>26</sup> beginning in 2014<sup>27</sup>, severely restricting movement for civilians. This increased military presence indicates a tight control of the area in and around the mass grave by the Egyptian military.

<sup>24</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'Summary of the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' Observations of the alleged mass grave site East of al-Arish. <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>

<sup>25</sup> The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights estimates that the total number of human remains in Pits A and B is more than 300 individuals. Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'Summary of the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' Observations of the alleged mass grave site East of al-Arish.- Estimated number of victims <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>

<sup>26</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 'Presidential Decree 442/2021: Perpetuating the State of Emergency in North Sinai', October 6, 2021, <https://sinaifhr.org/show/103>.

<sup>27</sup> Mada Masr, 'Curfew and state of emergency in North Sinai follows deadly attacks', October 25, 2014, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/10/25/news/u/curfew-and-state-of-emergency-in-north-sinai-follows-deadly-attacks/>.

120. Between 2010–2023, we observe multiple periods of activity at the mass grave, evidenced by the appearance of vehicle track marks and signs of ground disturbance at various points in time (see section D2). Notably prior to 2015, the activity at the site is minimal. The most significant activity took place between January 2015 and June 2017, coinciding with the peak of armed clashes in Sinai and a broader escalation of the conflict.
- i. Track marks are visible in the 14 June 2015 satellite image suggesting a period of activity in the pit between 25 January 2015 and 14 June 2015.
  - ii. Possible traces of earth flattening appear in the northern part of Pit A in the 15 June 2016, satellite image, indicating the potential creation of a new access route into the site, sometime between 14 June 2015, and 15 June 2016.
  - iii. By 26 August 2016, three craters appear within Pit A.
  - iv. Between 3 February 2017 and 2 June 2017, a significant number of new track marks emerge, suggesting another period of intensified activity at the site.
  - v. Between 2 June 2017 and 4 December 2017, these track marks remain largely undisturbed indicating that there was likely little to no activity during this 6-month period.
  - vi. Between 4 December 2017 and 6 June 2018, we see a track mark appearing in between Pit A and B.
  - vii. Between 10 November 2021 and 18 July 2023 a few track marks appear near Pit A as well as in Pit B.
121. Tire tracks analysis indicates that periodic visits to the site are made in and around the site, possibly in military vehicles (see section E).
122. Through 3D reconstruction and mapping of the remains (see section F), we observe that:
- i. At least 36 skulls were identified in Pit A, suggesting a minimum of 36 individuals were buried there. However, reports by SFHR indicate that the actual number of bodies could be significantly higher, with numerous remains unaccounted for in both pits<sup>28</sup>.
  - ii. The visibility of the remains at the surface of the soil suggests that the bodies were buried in shallow graves.
  - iii. While bone displacement over time is possible due to natural or environmental factors, the widespread distribution of remains across the site suggests that the burials occurred at multiple points in time rather than in a single event.

<sup>28</sup> Sinai Foundation for Human Rights 'Killed in Cold Blood', 'Summary of the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' Observations of the alleged mass grave site East of al-Arish.- Estimated number of victims <https://sinaifhr.org/show/625>

## H. CONCLUSION

123. The periodic presence of tire tracks, as well as the evident militarisation of the area around the mass grave sites, suggests that repeated visits to the site occurred between 2015–2023, particularly during the peak of the conflict between 2015–2017, likely by military or military-affiliated vehicles.
124. The presence of human remains scattered across the site, as well as their shallow burial, may indicate a level of confidence, and control over the area, by those responsible for the burials.
125. The emergence of a constellation of military outposts and the clearing of civilian infrastructure beginning in 2013 indicates tight control over the area by the Egyptian military. This control, coupled with the imposition of strict military curfews starting in 2014, makes it unlikely that any non-military actors could have accessed the site regularly, let alone bury bodies, without being observed or challenged.
126. Taken together, the above documentation suggests that the Egyptian military is not only aware of the presence of human remains on the site, but is likely responsible for the presence of those remains.