

TRAGEDY OF KHARTOUM: CAPITAL CITY OF 200 YEARS

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Tragedy of Khartoum: Capital City of 200 Years

History repeats itself. The civil war induced on April 15th, 2023, centered around Khartoum, capital of Sudan and three states of Darfur, has gone into 9th month today. No capital city in the world has experienced such a war scene or the destruction and looting suffered by Khartoum. Sudan has not recently experienced similar events. However, this is reminiscent of the Mongol army entering Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasids, on February 14, 1258. When the Mongol army under the command of Hulagu entered the Abbasid capital, one of the most terrible massacres in human history took place. Roads to the city were occupied and most of its people were killed. At the same time, the destruction of the landmarks of Islamic civilization and the massacre of its people were a tragedy on its own. This occupation maintains as one of the greatest disasters in Islamic history, despite the passing of a thousand years.

In 2013, the central government in Sudan established a temporary militia called the Rapid Support Forces (RFS) against the resistance movements in the country, which is witnessing the destruction, looting, occupation and mass displacement that Khartoum is currently witnessing. However, while 10 years have just passed, it would not be an exaggeration to describe them as the Mongols of the 21st century, due to all their destructive activities in the western and central parts of the country, taking advantage of the gap created by the military intervention in 2019. Because every brutal method was used to kill, torture and humiliate the people of Baghdad in the greatest looting known to humanity. The Rapid Support Forces forced and continue to force violence on their own country. The capital city of Khartoum, located where the Blue Nile and the White Nile meet, has turned into a “ghost town”, a metropole that is dissipating on the face of the earth.

First time in the history of modern Sudan, the capital city was moved to another location, namely Port Sudan by the Red Sea. When the civil war broke out in Khartoum on April 15, 2023 and by militias affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces, all foreign embassies, representatives of international organizations and executives of companies left the country. Also, as of April 30th, 2023, many public institutions and banks were forced to move outside the capital for the first time to Port Sudan, the country’s largest port city, because they were pointed as a target. Naturally, the city of Port Sudan has temporarily served as the administrative capital of the country. Many foreign representatives, including the Turkish Embassy, also chose this city as their residence address. Also governmental bodies, some of the universities, and Central Bank of Sudan, as well as headquarters of other banks moved to Port Sudan to resume their operations.

Moving the capital city under challenging conditions was a major decision. And this one was made on August 27th, 2023 by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of state Transitional Sovereignty Council, and Commander in Chief of Sudanese Armed Forces. He led a successful military operation to move the capital city from Khartoum to Port Sudan while the country had been dealing with the civil war broken out by the Rapid Support Forces over 4 months ago. This seaside city has become the administrative capital of the state ever since.

Likewise, since the International Khartoum Airport was rendered unusable by the Rapid Support Forces, and the historical capital turned into a battlefield, all flights were called off. As a result, the Port Sudan Airport has become the only airport to connect Sudan to the rest of the world.

As of December 19, 2023, the Rapid Support Forces militia entered Wad Madani, the central city of Al-Jazeera state, 180 kilometers away from Khartoum, and the second largest city in Sudan followed by the capital. Until that date, this was the city where civilians displaced from Khartoum mostly settled. This time, the Rapid Support Forces captured Wad Madani and in a dramatic manner, this city was plundered, as was the case in Khartoum, when the army unit there laid down their weapons and left. There was great outrage and shock over the looting, theft, kidnapping for ransom, rape, and arson of public buildings and factories. Desperate civilians were forced to relocate for the second time, this time migrating to other states.

Wad Madani being an easy target for the Rapid Support Forces militia to capture created another great outrage among Sudanese people. Militia forces tried to capture Sinnar and Nile states, just like they did with Wad Madani. Thus, on December 23, civilians throughout Sudan, including the Nile River, Red Sea, Kessela, El-Shamali, Kordufan, El-Gadarif states, declared “general mobilization” and started the fight against the militias.

The Sudanese National Army and Abdulaziz al-Hilu’s SPLM-N forces decided to wipe off the cities of Sudan against the Rapid Support Forces, which no longer had an official position, destroying and looting the cities of Sudan. The first city to be reclaimed was Dilling, the second largest city of South Kordofan state.

On December 28, 2023, it was announced that the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa would attempt to mediation. It was planned that Hemedti, head of the Rapid Support Forces, to meet different formations across the country for this mediation attempt, in line with finding African solution to African issues. However, although the information regarding his death has not yet been

clarified, it is claimed that his images prepared by artificial intelligence were used throughout the civil war. There is no concrete evidence that he’s still alive. Since the news that indicated Mohammed Hamdan Daglo, nicknamed Hemedti, who led the Rapid Support Forces, went to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, remained unannounced by the official websites of these countries, people raised suspicion around that question. It is said that Hemedti died in an attack in this civil war between Sudanese, but his death or murder was concealed in order to keep the motivation of his militia together. In fact, the general opinion is focused on the “wait and see” approach. On the other hand, there are those who have high expectations from a possible dialogue. It is even stated that permanent peace may be established.

It is known that in the clashes between the Sudanese National Army to prevent the Rapid Support Forces, which they also had to fight against, great destruction was caused to residential and public buildings in the capital Khartoum, signs of life in the city were lost, public and private facilities were closed and looted.



Except for abandoned civilian and military cars on the streets of the city, the signs of life here have been completely erased. Rapid Support Forces have looted richness of the entire region. Looting, destruction and massacre continue even after 250 days. All this time, a life is lived without electricity, water, food, basic food and health services. Similar to the Mongols who started fires in every city they occupied, there are no mosques, churches, houses, schools, hospitals, banks, bazaars, workplaces or

government institutions left in any residential area. Even the National Museum and Zoo were destroyed.

The Rapid Support Forces did even worse, using every brutal means to occupy the homes of the people of Khartoum, rape and humiliate their inhabitants. They carried out mass looting by stealing people's jewelry, cars and household items. By implementing a policy of unfair settlement in the homes of civilians, the method of the RSF is almost no different from Israel's method of Jewish settlement in Palestine. They also broadcast live on social media via their mobile phones to brag about what they have done.

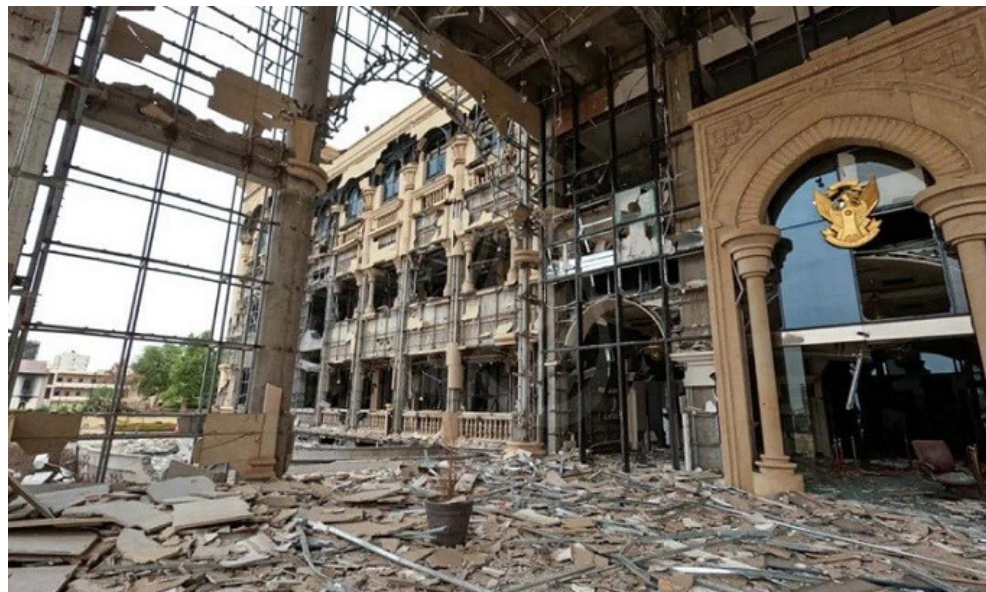


Today, the unchanging view in Khartoum is that it is a ghost metropolis full of abandoned houses, militia snipers and corpses lying in the streets, and most of it is occupied by these militias. They turned civilians into human shields against the aerial attacks of the Sudanese National Army.

Khartoum-based buildings and towers that are symbols of modernization, as well as dozens of historical buildings such as the Sudanese Presidential Palace and the Sudan National Museum, as well as thousands of private houses and apartments, many factories, schools, universities, hospitals, public buildings, etc., were targeted because the Rapid State Forces were hiding there. . In this way, buildings belonging to the Sudanese people and state could not avoid being further destroyed.



The current state of the **International University of Africa**, one of the most prestigious universities in Sudan and Africa



When vitally important sovereign headquarters, including Khartoum International Airport, which is the country's largest airport providing air transportation from the capital Khartoum, became completely unusable because of the attacks of the Rapid Support Forces in the first days of the war, domestic and international flights from here were completely stopped. Due to the military or civilian importance of airports in the war, Khartoum Airport was completely destroyed. The building and airfield were made unusable. Most of the aircraft were destroyed and were completely out of service.



The destruction of the airport was not limited to the demolition of buildings. The war has destroyed the livelihoods of people in the regions surrounding the capital, educational opportunities for their children, and the wealth that families have accumulated over decades.

Pressure of the war had major impact on the Sudanese healthcare industry, which had already been failing due to lack of infrastructure. Major hospitals in the capital were either looted by the militias to treat their own wounded members or occupied as military headquarters. In short, as the entire city turned into a huge battlefield, all public and private hospitals were destroyed and became unserviceable. More than 90% of over 200 public and private hospitals and healthcare institutions were completely destroyed. Facing this sad situation in which Sudan has found itself in, the need for Türkiye's experience in the healthcare industry and its infrastructure, including city hospitals, is greater than ever.

According to estimated statistics based on observations obtained from video footage and photographs widely published on social media; it appears that 29 ministry buildings in Khartoum, as well as archaeological and historical buildings built during the

Turkish and British rule in Sudan in the 19th century, the presidential palace and the museum attached to it were also significantly damaged.

The streets of Khartoum are in ruins and have become motionless. Cars are ruined, destroyed, abandoned or set on fire, and they are scattered everywhere. As the fighting continued and escalated, approximately 93% of power stations and offices were destroyed in different districts of Khartoum. Most of the database of the Electricity Distribution Company were lost or looted.

Images and videos of looting and setting of fire of 28 commercial bank branches and 19 bank offices, along with part of the Central Bank of Sudan building in Khartoum alone were shared. Live broadcasts and video footage on social media by members of the Rapid Support Forces were also boasting about the money they stole, as if they had were national heroes.

A total of over 158 major markets and bazaars of Khartoum, including Al-Suq Al-Arabi- Saad Qişra, Suq Odurman faced with air bombardment. Or most of them were first looted by the Rapid Support Forces and their thieving gangs, then they were set on fire, and now they are unusable and destroyed.



Civil war destroys Khartoum to the ground and wipes off all buildings.

The capital, Khartoum, had a population of more than 7 million, and all of them had to leave their homes and either move to other states or, for those who had the means, to neighboring countries. Today, Sudan ranks first as the country with the most displaced people in the world, beating Syria and Ukraine on this.

As a result, observations show that many public and private institutions are being destroyed in a widespread, organized and systematic way. They also forced every Sudanese to flee as the most basic needs of daily life were deliberately targeted.

Experts estimate the amount of direct and indirect damage to the industrial and banking sectors in the capital Khartoum and other regions at approximately 4 billion dollars. There is also an expectation that these losses will increase significantly if the current war is not stopped.

Having been sabotaged and looted by the RSF, industrial plants, public buildings, and especially banks will not be able to conduct their activities and perform their duties for a long time. Perhaps Sudan will need the close attention and cooperation of Türkiye and Turkish companies to stand alone after the war.

Emerging of Rapid Support Forces

- Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were consented by the parliament of the period in August 2013 and their powers and duties were defined by the Presidential decree. Its origins lie in the infamous militia called “Janjaweed”, which was established by the central government in the civil war against the armed resistance organizations in Darfur.
- Although they were armed by former president Omar al-Bashir against armed groups in Darfur, from a historical perspective, they were not the first to arm the tribes in Kordofan, but were helped by Imam Sadiq al-Mahdi in the war against the insurgency in South Sudan during the third democratic period.
- Until 2019, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were created on a controlled basis by the Omar Al-Bashir government as a disciplined military unit that worked according to directives and had no political role. The purpose of its establishment was to assist Sudan’s armed forces in the fight against the armed movements of the region during the Darfur crisis, which was the hottest political region in the world between 2003 and 2015. It was by no means

a force operating parallel to the regular army. Until one morning in 2019 when the change of power occurred, they had been in full agreement and high coordination with the military leaders to whom the country’s affairs were handed over.

- After 2019, with the transitional period in Sudan, the peace process and political peace issues began to take place when the Deputy Prime Minister Hamdok intruded his realms of authority and duty, including economic issues, during his time in the economic mechanism. Thus, by presenting himself as a separate institution and a structure that does not comply with the orders of the armed unit, it began to assume political roles outside its duties and job description.
- Over the years, RSF has earned hundreds of millions of dollars for sending mercenaries to fight for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Moreover, it grew stronger by consolidating its control over the gold mines. Hemedti Dagalo, head of the Rapid Support Forces, also deepened ties with the United Arab Emirates and cooperated with Wagner, a notorious Russian private military company that – like the military – has been implicated in serious human rights abuses in places such as Syria, Ukraine, and Mali.
- Since then, General Dagalo has created a powerful paramilitary force that has intervened in conflicts in Yemen and Libya and controls some of Sudan’s gold mines.
- Such strong entity, apart from the army, is considered a source of instability in Sudan, as it would be in any other country. Flush with wealth and support from foreign patrons, the RSF quickly became a formidable rival to the army, setting the stage for today’s conflict.
- Ation in parallel to the Sudanese army. They have modern weapons and their leader, Hemedti, had extensive international relations with global military institutions. In addition to their control over gold mines and domestic and foreign investments over the years, the RSF and the army control lucrative sectors such as gold, sesame and gum arabic exports.
- Unlike Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Sudanese Transitional Administrative Council and the Sudanese National Army, Hemedti did not have the legitimacy of being the head of the Sudanese army. So he hired consultants to lobby on his behalf in the capitals of Western countries while he built hospitals and clinics in Sudan.
- It has become clear to the public that the armed forces took opposing sides, did not obey their orders, openly opposed them, and did not organize what they wanted to say and do.
- The RFS and its leader Hemedti began to escape their responsibilities. He

accused the Sudanese army of “obstructing the political process”, sometimes with reports to the civilian wing that it was obstructing the “transition of the political process”. Recently. The differences of opinion between Hemedti and Al-Burhan increased and this was echoed in the media.

