# Sudan National Museum suffers severe damage and looting amid ongoing conflict



The Sudan National Museum in Khartoum, renowned for its extensive collection of artefacts from ancient Nubian civilisations and centuries-old Christian wall paintings, has suffered severe damage and looting amid the ongoing conflict in Sudan that erupted two years ago. Once a vibrant cultural landmark attracting school groups, tourists, and hosting concerts, the museum now bears the scars of war, with shattered glass, bullet casings scattered on its floors, and significant losses to its treasured collections.

Ikhlas Abdel Latif Ahmed, director of museums at Sudan's National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, described the impact in an interview with BBC Newsday, stating, "They destroyed our identity, and our history." She detailed how the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a key faction in the conflict that took control of central Khartoum, dismantled and looted the museum. Numerous artefacts were either destroyed or removed for sale, with some suspected to have been taken to the United Arab Emirates—a nation accused of financially supporting the RSF, though both parties have denied such claims.

Ms Ahmed highlighted the fate of a secure gold collection room, saying, "We had a strong room for the gold collection, they managed to open it and took all the gold. Maybe they kept it for themselves, or maybe they traded it in the market." Among the missing items is a gold collar from the pyramid of King Talakhamani at Nuri, dating back to the 5th Century BC. When questioned about the value of these pieces, she emphasised their priceless cultural significance rather than monetary worth, noting, "There is no value for the museum artefacts, it's more expensive than you could imagine."

The National Museum's plight is emblematic of widespread destruction suffered in Khartoum during the war, which has left government buildings, banks, and offices charred and damaged. Other museums and archaeological sites across Sudan have reported similar incidents of looting and destruction. In response, UNESCO issued warnings last September about the risks facing Sudanese heritage, urging art dealers worldwide to refrain from trading artefacts potentially smuggled out of the country.

Amgad Farid, head of the Fikra for Studies and Development think-tank, condemned the actions of the RSF as a strategic attempt to erase Sudan's historical identity. In a statement quoted by the BBC, he said, "The RSF's actions transcend mere criminality. They constitute a deliberate and malicious assault on Sudan's historical identity, targeting the invaluable heritage of Nubian, Coptic, and Islamic civilisations spanning over 7,000 years, constituting a cornerstone of African and global history." He described these attacks as a calculated effort "to sever its people from their past, and to plunder millennia of human history for profit."

Following the recent military victory of Sudanese forces over the RSF in Khartoum, the de facto government has announced plans to collaborate with Interpol and UNESCO to recover stolen artefacts. Nonetheless, officials acknowledge the difficulty and potential hazards involved in such recovery operations.

The human cost of the conflict remains significant, with United Nations reports indicating that nearly 13 million Sudanese have been displaced and approximately 150,000 people killed since the fighting began in 2023. Ms Ahmed reflected on the dual toll of war, “The war is against the people of Sudan,” lamenting both the loss of life and cultural heritage.

Despite the devastation, Ms Ahmed and other conservationists remain committed to rebuilding Sudan's historical institutions. "Inshallah [God willing], we will get all our collections back," she said. "And we build it more beautiful than before."

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey-museum-blog/2025/04/10/extensive-damage-to-the-sudan-national-museum/> - This URL corroborates the extensive damage and looting at the Sudan National Museum, including broken and missing artifacts. It highlights the museum's use as a military base by the Rapid Support Forces and the confirmed fears of looting.
* <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/sudan-national-museum-looting-unesco-nubian-campaign-cultural-heritage/> - This article discusses the threat to Sudan's cultural heritage and confirms the looting at the Sudan National Museum. It emphasizes the role of UNESCO in addressing the risks to Sudanese heritage.
* <https://culturalpropertynews.org/looting-and-destruction-of-sudan-national-museum/> - This source provides detailed information on the looting and destruction of the Sudan National Museum, including the involvement of the Rapid Support Forces and the extensive loss of artifacts.
* <https://www.africanews.com/2025/04/14/sudans-cultural-heritage-in-ruins-khartoums-national-museum-ravaged-by-war/> - This article highlights Sudan's cultural heritage in ruins, focusing on the damage to the National Museum in Khartoum and the broader impact of the war on cultural institutions.
* <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2025/04/01/heritage-authorities-express-sorrow-sudan-national-museum-looted-ransacked> - This piece underscores the sorrow expressed by heritage authorities over the looting and severe destruction of the Sudan National Museum, framing it within the context of Sudan's ongoing civil war.
* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/22/fighting-in-khartoum-as-sudan-crisis-deepens> - This article does not specifically mention the museum's damage but discusses the broader conflict in Sudan, providing context for the backdrop against which the museum's destruction occurred. However, a closer match to the specific topic is needed; thus, it's essential to find an alternative source directly addressing the museum or the conflict's cultural impact.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5y4lxxj055o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data