



North Darfur: The Fall of Sultan Ali Dinar Museum In Elfashir

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) expresses deep concern about the systematic targeting of cultural and historical sites by the warring parties in Sudan. The destruction of historical sites by the warring parties particularly RSF is a deliberate effort to erase the history of the Sudanese people specifically in the Darfur region and to destabilize the symbols that unite communities.

On 10 January 2025, the Sultan Ali Dinar Museum in Elfashir, North Darfur state, was destroyed following a shelling by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the area. The Museum is located in the city centre near some government offices and approximately 500 meters from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) headquarters, also known as Unit 6 in Elfashir. The shelling concentrated around the museum, destroying it. The little that was left of the museum was burned down.

The Darfur Kingdom is Sudan's oldest kingdom, which existed as an independent state from 1613 to 1916. In 1916, after the defeat of the Darfur army, the kingdom became a part of Sudan. The process of building the palace started during the reign of Sultan Ali Dinar in 1871 and was initiated by Alhaj Abdul Raziq, a Turkish national from Bagdad, Iraq. It was finally completed in 1912. Several years later, the palace was turned into a museum in Honour of the last Sultan. Belongings, including the throne of Sultan Ali Dinar, the last Sultan (King) of Darfur Kingdom, and other artifacts, including conventional weapons were preserved and kept at the Sultan Ali Dinar Museum. In 2017, the museum was renovated and restored by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Directorate (TİKA) and handed over to the government of Sudan. The museum was later reopened to the public in 2021.

The Sultan Ali Dinar Palace/Museum is a beacon of cultural heritage in the Darfur region therefore, the attack and destruction of the museum represents the destruction of a part of Darfur's history, an effort to erase its identity.

Background

Sudan has a history of targetting historical sites, and during this current Sudan war, this tactic/trend has continued to escalate. For example, in 2021, during the attacks in Elgenina, artifacts in the Sultan Bahar Eldien and the Sultan of the Masalite kingdom in West Darfur museums were stolen by the attackers. Additionally, in July 2023, the royal dresses and golden swords belonging to the

first Masalite Sultan were stolen from the house of the current Masalite Sultan following the attack on his residence by RSF and its allied militia in Elgenina.

Recommendations

ACJPS calls upon the;

- √ Sudanese authorities to protect Sudan's historical and cultural landmarks.
- √ Sudanese authorities to conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the crimes of theft and looting at the museum and hold the perpetrators accountable.
- √ Regional and International organizations and governments to condemn the destruction of historical sites and support those who care about the preservation of Sudan's history to document violations.