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## Endangered Scholars Worldwide

Özgür Kazaklı

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# Endangered Scholars Worldwide

Attacks on higher education communities are occurring at an alarming rate worldwide, threatening the safety and well-being of scholars, students, and academic staff, as well as the autonomy of higher education institutions. While we continue to publish regular updates in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, in response to a global increase in threats to academic freedom, Endangered Scholars Worldwide (ESW) has expanded its presence as an online publication under the auspices of the New University in Exile Consortium ([www.newuniversityinexileconsortium.org](http://www.newuniversityinexileconsortium.org)), sharing frequent updates on news and developing cases in contribution to the Consortium's efforts to create a supportive intellectual community for threatened, exiled scholars.



For the most current information and ways in which you can be involved in our efforts to defend academic freedom and free expression, we invite you to visit our website [www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net](http://www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net) or follow us at [x.com/ESWNEWSCHOOL](https://x.com/ESWNEWSCHOOL).

If you are aware of a scholar or student whose case you believe we should investigate, please get in touch with us at [esw@newschool.edu](mailto:esw@newschool.edu).

Thank you for your unwavering support.

## **SPECIAL DELIVERY**

From Myanmar to Nigeria, from Ukraine to Israel/Palestine and Yemen, armed conflict is one of the factors severely limiting academic freedom and access to education. Its impacts range from infrastructural incapac-

ities to the complete destruction of higher education systems in different regions.

One of the countries in which armed conflict is taking a serious toll on higher education is Sudan. On April 15, 2023, a civil war broke out in the country between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which has resulted in the displacement of 12 million Sudanese people and increased the number of people in need of humanitarian aid to 25 million, according to the International Rescue Committee. Estimates for the death toll range between 15,000 and 150,000.

Due to the scale and intensity of the conflict, Sudan's universities have been gravely impacted. After more than a year since the start of the civil war, over 100 higher education institutions and research centers have been partially or fully destroyed due to the conflict between the SAF and the RSF. Both sides have accused each other of using universities for military purposes. In the *Education under Attack 2024* report, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack noted that the Omdurman Islamic University in the city of Omdurman and the University of Medical Sciences and Technology in Khartoum were used as military bases in 2023 by unidentified armed groups. The usage of university campuses for any military purpose endangers students, faculty, and staff by making direct attacks more likely.

Direct attacks frequently happen through air strikes. On June 4, 2023, SAF conducted an air strike on the International University of Africa, killing 10 individuals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similarly, El Geneina University and Nyala University were both hit by airstrikes on June 6, 2023, and September 13, 2023, respectively.

In addition to being caught up in the clashes between the SAF and RSF, universities have also been targeted by groups that have engaged in looting. In May 2023, after days of strikes and looting, the library archive at the Mohamed Omar Bashir Center for Sudanese Studies at Omdurman Ahlia University was completely burned, destroying many primary sources and original research. Later, in August 2023, lab equip-

ment, furniture, and more were stolen from the University of Nyala during a looting. Looting has been common on campuses that house labs and/or other medical faculties. A study covering 58 medical schools in Sudan found that almost half of them had been attacked at least once in just first three months of the conflict. The same study also found that 74 percent of attacked schools were also looted and 68 percent were used as military bases after the attacks. One of the more recent instances of looting occurred on July 23, 2024, when members of the RSF looted the University of Gezira, targeting medical and lab equipment.

Finally, on top of its direct effects, armed conflict has also impacted higher education in Sudan indirectly. The civil war significantly damaged civilian infrastructure. Many universities are trying to provide remote education, as millions have been internally displaced. However, disruptions to internet services have rendered those trying to finish their studies, such as the students who were set to graduate in 2023, unable to do so. With public expenditures likely to be directed toward sectors that are more immediately consequential for the war effort, it is highly probable that infrastructural problems will continue to pose an obstacle to accessing higher education in the country.

Endangered Scholars Worldwide (ESW) is deeply concerned about the dangers posed to the livelihood of students and faculty by the armed conflict between the SAF and RSF in Sudan. We strongly condemn the targeting of university campuses through air strikes, as well as looting of lab and medical equipment. ESW further calls on all armed groups to cease the military usage of universities that opens them up to more attacks. We invite members of the global community dedicated to upholding human rights to join our call.

Visit [www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net](http://www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net) for more information.

—By Özgür Kazaklı