

## CULTURAL HERITAGE MONITORING LAB RAPID REPORT: Damage to the Sudan Natural History Museum (17 May 2023)



On 17 May 2023, the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab (CHML) confirmed significant damage to the Sudan Natural History Museum (also referred to as the University of Khartoum's Natural History Museum) in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. Among other collections, the museum maintains an extensive collection of plant and animal specimens,<sup>1</sup> including examples of extinct and rare species. Additionally, the museum grounds house living mammals, reptiles, and birds, which have been inaccessible to caretakers since 15 April 2023.<sup>2</sup> On 26 April 2023, the Director of the Sudan Natural History Museum expressed concerns about looting and the welfare of the museum's animals.<sup>3</sup> **Using high-resolution satellite imagery, the CHML: 1) identified significant damage to the museum's main building (right image, yellow arrow); 2) determined that the damage occurred on 19 April 2023; and 3) identified the only other building within the block that sustained damage at the same time (right image, orange arrow).** Imagery details of the museum indicate damage from fire. This damage corresponds to a period of fighting in the vicinity of the General Command of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Khartoum International Airport, which sits approximately 0.6 km from the museum.<sup>4</sup>

Visit <https://www.vnmh.net/research-collections/chml> for information on CHML, <https://culturalrescue.si.edu/> for information on SCRI, <https://cidcm.umd.edu> for information on CIDCM, and <https://www.penn.museum/sites/chc/> for information on PennCHC.

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<sup>1</sup> Sudan Memory. (2022). Sudan Natural History Museum. Available at: <https://www.sudanmemory.org/cms/70/1/> (Accessed 17 May 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Hashem, H. (2023). Sudan conflict raises fears for survival of animals at Natural History Museum in Khartoum. *BNN Breaking*, 10 May 2023. Available at: <https://bnn.network/breaking-news/sudan-conflict-raises-fears-for-survival-of-animals-at-natural-history-museum-in-khartoum/>.

<sup>3</sup> Metwally, A. (2023). Sudan's museums, and millenia [sic] of heritage, caught in the crossfire. *The Africa Report*, 5 May 2023. Available at: <https://www.theafricareport.com/305330/sudans-museums-and-millenia-of-heritage-caught-in-the-crossfire/>.

<sup>4</sup> Koettl, C. (2023). Satellite images capture the fight for Khartoum's airport. *The New York Times*, 19 April 2023. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/04/19/world/sudan-khartoum-fighting-news/satellite-images-capture-the-fight-for-khartoums-airport?smid=url-share>.