

Decades of Corruption and Land Manipulation

Investigation Report by: SalaaMedia Center

The scourge of land corruption is deeply rooted in Sudan's reality for quite sometime, casting shadows over inter-communal relations and ethnic groups, sparking violent conflicts. Such corruption has spreaded to all regions of Sudan in different degrees and shapes. Some cases have reached courts, while other cases dropped and bogged in complexities. However, many of these land corruption practices have institutional or constitutional bases, linked to laws deemed unfair by many people. Land corruption in Darfur, particularly in Nyala town, South Darfur, has repeatedly surfaced, especially during Sudan's ongoing war.

In Nyala, land corruption has escalated to forging Title Deeds, encroaching public spaces/ square, and converting them into residential areas or markets. Authorities justify this as revenue generation.

New realities emerged upon Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) gaining control over Nyala town and forming its Civil Administration. South Darfur's Acting Governor, Bashir Mursal Hassab- Allah, issued a decree suspending the operation of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Urban Development. This decision came in response to widespread unauthorized planning of public spaces and forgery of Title Deeds of citizens' abandoned house due to the ongoing war.



Copy of the decree suspension of ministries' operations



Copy of the decree of workforce suspension

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
ولاية جنوب دارفور

التاريخ 2024/6/27
الموضوع: كشف المخالفين للقرار الوصي

الكشف رقم (3)

الرقم	الاسم	الصفة
1.	صلاح الدين احمد اسماعيل عبدالماجد	نائب امين الحكومة
2.	ابراهيم عثمان احمد	الحكم المحلي
3.	جبرة الجبلي كمال	ضابط اداري محلية كلس
4.	محمد ابراهيم التهامي هون	وزارة المالية
5.	عز الدين صديق احمد اللحي	وزارة المالية
6.	الصادق الهادي عيسى نيكه	وزارة المالية
7.	حسن الهادي عيسى نيكه	وزارة المالية
8.	عصام عبدالله ادم علي	وزارة التخطيط
9.	عيسى احمد محمد بكر	التربية والتوجيه
10.	الصديق موسى محمد حسين	وزارة المالية
11.	القاسم احمد هارون	التربية والتوجيه
12.	محيى الدين موسى ابوبكر	التربية والتوجيه
13.	عيسى مختار ابراهيم حمد	وزارة المالية

14.	محمد عبدالرحمن التود	وزارة المالية
15.	الصادق محمد ادم الضني	وزارة الثروة الحيوانية
16.	عبدالله الطيب محمد	التربية والتوجيه
17.	عبدالمطعم عبدالله عبدالله	المالية/الثروة الحيوانية
18.	ياسر علي احمد اسحق	وزارة التخطيط
19.	ادم موسى ابكر	التربية والتوجيه
20.	ياسر عثمان لوج	التربية والتوجيه
21.	بنار الدين ادم ابكر	الثروة الحيوانية
22.	حاتم جابر محمد جابر	وزارة التخطيط
23.	جعفر علي العلي	وزارة الزراعة
24.	سامي جابر الطاهر محمد	وزارة التخطيط
25.	ابراهيم محمد ابراهيم	الثروة الحيوانية
26.	سليمان عثمان زيادة	وزارة المالية
27.	التزوير محمد تاجي	الثروة الحيوانية
28.	ادم عثمان زيادة	الحكم المحلي
29.	خوف الراكى خوف	التربية والتوجيه
30.	محمد عيادي الطاهر	وزارة التخطيط
31.	عبدالله عثمان زيادة	التربية والتوجيه
32.	علي محمد خميس	وزارة التخطيط

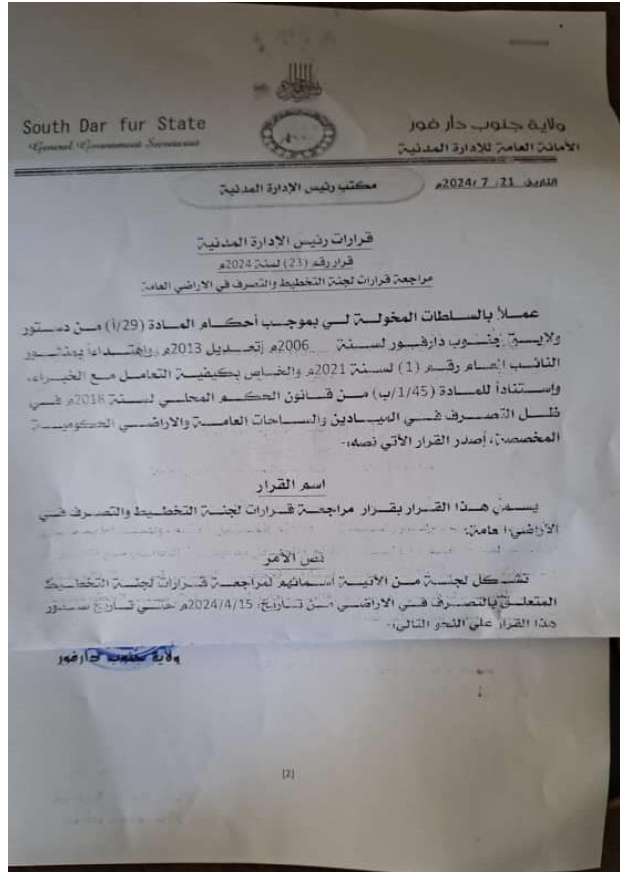
Copy of suspended workforce of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Urban Development

Facts

Dozens of cases of public spaces in Nyala being converted into residents have been reported, in addition to forgery of Title Deeds. Via a thorough investigation into the matter, it became clear that extensive modifications have been made to lands, particularly in the southern part of the city. following the Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) takeover of Nyala, several public spaces, allocated for public use such as youth clubs, playgrounds, or government reserves, were converted and allocated to people between December 2023 to date.

Evidently, the Acting Governor's decisions, suspending the operation of the Ministry of Urban Planning and dissolving the land planning committee, have paved the way to corruption on land in South Darfur State.

According to identical testimonies by two anonymous sources who spoke to SalaaMedia, shortly after the suspension decisions; that two RSF officers, (a Captain and a Major), have pressured the Deputy Governor Salaheddine Ahmed Al-Mouj to form a new committee for lands. After its formation, the new committee took oath before the aforementioned RSF officers, while Dr. Adel Jabr Al-Nour heading the Ministry. Since the formation of the RSF's Civil Administration in the state, a new minister has been appointed to oversee land management.

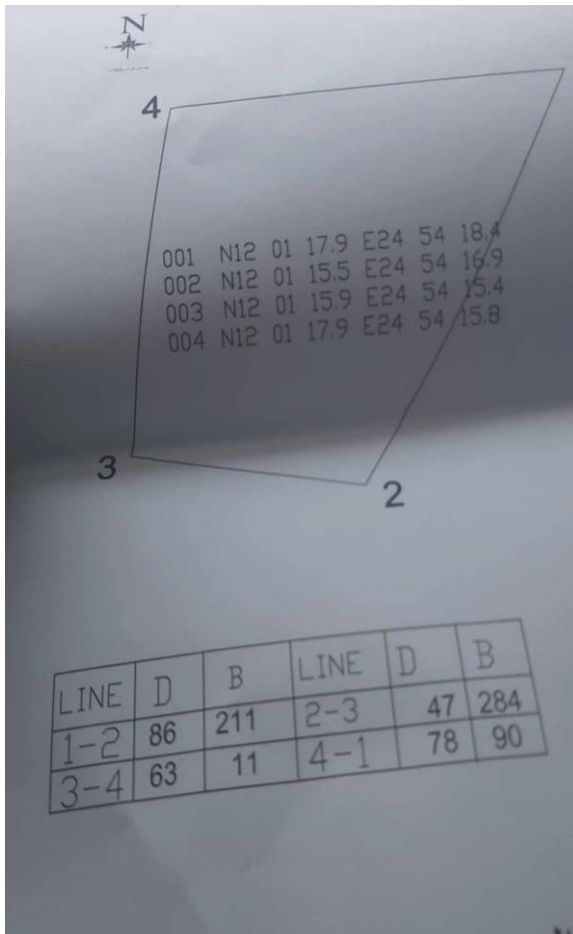


Copy of the Civil Administration Decree on reviewing the decision of the Public Land Planning Committee

Land Manipulation

Land manipulation and forgery are not new phenomena in Darfur or Sudan. However, these practices escalated during the current war. Forging land Title Deeds spreaded widely in South Darfur- Nyala during the current conflict, exploited by brokers who took advantage of wartime chaos and fleeing of families. Investigations revealed that the forged Title Deeds were issued by ministry's employees, bribed by individuals seeking to purchase land, at a black market for fake Title Deeds, known as **(Boko)** operated through the involvement of officials Land Administration Authorities and brokers.

A real estate broker in Nyala told Salamadia, "*Manipulation of land registrations in South Darfur increased after theft and forgery of Title Deeds*". The broker specified that the manipulated areas include blocks (2/W), (4/W), (5/W), and (6/W/S) in Al-Andalus neighborhood, south of Nyala.



"The Google map and the sketch above illustrate block (6/W/S) in the Al-Andalus neighbourhood, south of Nyala city."

The broker revealed that fellow brokers present Title Deeds in the market, with concealed identities of the real owners: *"An agreement is reached between a broker and a buyer at a low price that is not comparable to the real value of the plot. Buyers often think they found houses at suitable prices, without knowing they are falling into a trap of forgery; and after investigation, they find out it is a forged Title Deed, and then begin the journey of searching for who forged the documents."*

A witness, who wished to remain anonymous, said properties are often sold at significantly lower prices than actual values; *"Our family's house in the Airport neighborhood – at the north side of the town - was put up for sale in the real estate market after changing my father's name in the Title Deed, at first they were selling it at a 100 then dropped to 60 million Sudanese Pounds"*.

The broker explained further that before the war, forged Title Deeds could be identified by the serial numbers or certificates of ownership. However, with the dysfunction of Courts and Land Registrar, distinguishing genuine from fake Title Deeds is a really challenging. Initially, the Land Registrar issues three copies of Title Deeds (a copy for the owner, the second for court filing and the third goes to the archive of the land registrar). Therefore, if one the three copies is found, that land would be subjected to sell through a lawyer upon forged Title Deed and Power of Attorney.

Public Spaces to houses

Corruption over land has extended to public spaces, playgrounds and blocks allocated for compensation. Many spaces around Nyala town have been illegally distributed as residents, such blocks (10 and 15F) of Al-Dawrah neighborhood, (13A) of Al-Salam neighborhood, and block (15Z) of

the Al-Mina Al-Barry (*Dry Port*) designated as compensation residents for Al-Fatehab neighborhood; in addition to block (6H) in Kararrie neighborhood - according to a source who spoke to SalaaMedia.

A prominent figure from block (6W) Al-Andalus neighborhood accused the Land Administration authorities to have plotted 1,800 square meters plot number 274, initially allocated for the Al-Andalus Youth Center, and converted it into residential houses. He further disclosed that; they attempted to register the plot before the war; *"We met a number of officials, starting with the Director of Youth and Sports Sector, then the Minister of Education, who referred us to the land authorities to complete the procedures, but the war circumstances prevented us. Then, after institutions resumed operation in the state, we were surprised that the plot had been distributed as residents"*. The figure disclosed that the individuals who obtained the houses presented Title Deeds and financial receipts totaling 1.3 billion Sudanese pounds paid to the Land Administration Authorities in three installments (500, 300 and 500 million Sudanese Pounds; *"We told them this land is for the youth, but they responded to us by showing Title Deeds given to them by the Land Authorities"*. He described the selling price of the plot as cheaper than the actual land value in the neighborhood.

According to the figure, the new owners of the youth center's land were actually residing in that area as a slum dwelling; adding that they (*referring to the new owners*) met a number of officials before the war aiming to gain ownership over the land, but their attempts failed because the area has already been allocated to Al-Andalus Youth Center and can not be disposed of nor repurposed- according to a response from the Land Authority by then. Based on testimonies of some officials from the Land Administration Authorities, it is clear that after the RSF took control of Nyala, encroachments on public spaces increased to extend of tempering with allocated lands instead of government reserves.

Perpetrators

The Ministry of Urban Planning includes a number of sensitive departments, such as Lands, Survey, Research, Planning and Investment among other departments, with more than 700 employees. A reliable source from the ministry, that around 30 employees resumed work immediately after RSF took control. Unconfirmed allegations indicate that the Director of Lands Investment - who became the Minister of Infrastructure and Urban Development after resuming work - has withdrew all documents and papers from the ministry after the fall of the Army Headquarters in Nyala with intension to keep them. Among the top department managers who reported to work were, the Director General of the Ministry before the formation of the Civil Administration by RSF; the Minister's Office Manager; the Contracts Treasury Officer before the war until the formation of the Civil Administration, who became the Director of Nyala Lands Administration; the Director of the Survey Department before the war until the formation of the Civil Administration, who has been later appointed Director General of the Ministry.

Through the investigation, close tracking and testimonies obtained by SalaaMedia, it appears that forgery of Title Deeds and corruption plotted on public spaces in Nyala, are linked to close circles of brokers and influential figures within the Lands Administration Authorities; in addition to steeling of Title Deeds from the archives or forging new ones, after RSF took control of the situation in South Darfur. Questions remain: *"What is the fate of citizens who may lose their homes and lands due to encroachment or forgery of documents during the war? Is it possible to lose their land in the absence of land records due to damage or theft? Is there a way to preserve their rights? Is it possible that losing their lands will lead to renewed violence?"*