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## 3.1.4. Housing and general living conditions

A geospatial analysis of Khartoum conducted in March 2026 indicated that nighttime light emissions across Khartoum – a satellite-based indicator used as a proxy for measuring economic activity – fell sharply at the onset of conflict in April 2023 and remained low through 2025, indicating a profound contraction in economic activity and population presence. The analysis also indicated structural damage affecting 7.8 % of the urban area.<sup>703</sup> Many roads have been cleared from rubble. However, for residents and businesses, many problems remained. More than a third of Khartoum's nine million residents fled when most of the city was captured by the RSF in 2023.<sup>704</sup> IOM Deputy Director General visited the country in April 2026 and stated 'that 'large numbers of people' were 'returning to areas where homes and critical infrastructure including water, health, electricity, have been heavily damaged'.<sup>705</sup>

In the capital, private properties have been looted and vandalised by the RSF, and violations have also extended to government buildings, university campuses, hospitals and businesses. During the war, RSF members have taken photos and posted videos of themselves and their families relocating to the homes of displaced civilians.<sup>706</sup> On Liberty Street, Khartoum's main commercial avenue, only a few of the looted shops have reopened. As of January 2026, a tea seller returned to the capital said he earned between 4 000 and 5 000 SDG [approximately between EUR 1.2 and 1.5] a day, less than two euros and about a third of her pre-war income.<sup>707</sup>

As of May 2025, all the capital's power stations have been destroyed. As people returned to their houses they found them turned upside down by looters, with deep holes drilled into walls and roads in efforts to uncover valuable copper wiring. On Sudan's Nile Street, once one of the capital's busiest highways, a ditch about one meter deep and four kilometre long had been dug. Khartoum's two main water stations went out of service early in the war as RSF fighters looted machinery and used fuel oil to power vehicles, according to Khartoum state spokesperson. Those who have remained in Khartoum resorted to drinking water from the Nile or long-forgotten wells, exposing them to waterborne illnesses, and few hospitals equipped to treat them.<sup>708</sup>

Up to 1 000 homes were destroyed by the military once the SAF took control of the capital in 2025 in areas close to the outskirts of Khartoum North. Residents allegedly received minimal warning from authorities.<sup>709</sup> Additionally, authorities had reportedly launched a campaign to demolish unplanned housing in peripheral areas of the city such as Mandela, Al-Suraiha, Al-

Fitayhab, Al-Azba, and Al-Khairat towards the end of 2025. The demolition left residents with no alternative shelter, leaving many to sleep in the open.[710](#)

In December 2025, residents of Khartoum described streets filled with uncollected waste and public areas being used as burial sites.[711](#) The Sudanese Media Forum indicated in January 2026 that the conditions for a safe return were not met yet and that lack of basic services in addition to insecurity and proliferation of weapons persisted. According to the organisation, humanitarian organisations confirmed that more than sixty per cent of potential return areas were uninhabitable.[712](#)

In March 2026, a national media outlet reported that the government had intensified calls for residents to return to the capital despite the limited access in the city to basic services. Residents who had returned relied on a network of *Takaya* ('charity kitchens') that were themselves reportedly close to collapse due to economic pressure and state repression. Business owners have been reportedly returning to destroyed and empty premises, having to repay the rent accrued during the war. While some neighbourhoods in Omdurman and Khartoum North saw a relative return, major districts like Jabra, Al-Amarat, and Al-Taif reportedly remained ghost towns. Returnees reportedly faced disease outbreaks and soaring prices, prompting some to consider a 'reverse migration' from the capital.[713](#)

As of April 2026, IOM indicated about four million voluntary returns to Sudan.[714](#) Khartoum received 1.8 million returnees, 92 % of which from internal displacement. Households who returned to Khartoum state reported slightly more diverse reasons for return compared to other states: the majority (89 %) cited improved security at locations of origin, but 7 % returned primarily for family reunification and 2 % due to depleted resources in areas of displacement.[715](#) An estimated 82 % of returnees moved back to urban neighbourhoods, and nearly all returnee households (96 %) were staying at their habitual residence. A much smaller group, 2 % of returnee households, reportedly stayed with host families while the other 2 % stayed in collective centres.[716](#)

In April 2026, returns to Khartoum were rising rapidly, placing additional strain on damaged urban infrastructure. Water systems, electricity networks, health facilities, and housing remained heavily affected, complicating efforts to restore basic services.[717](#) IOM indicated that more than two million additional people are expected to return to Khartoum in 2026.[718](#) Returning nationals often arrive in fragile conditions. Many communities suffered as a result of damaged infrastructure, limited access to basic services and livelihoods, and inadequate water and sanitation systems.[719](#) According to a member of the local ERRs, many returnees were reportedly from vulnerable groups and had returned after being unable to sustain living costs while displaced or living as refugees abroad.[720](#)

In Khartoum state, ERRs initiated water and electricity infrastructure repairs, the rehabilitation of damaged health facilities, and the provision of food and health services. ERR structures vary. Some Khartoum ERRs have developed sophisticated internal systems by establishing technical offices, such as statistics offices for needs assessments, supply, financial, health, gender, and education offices, as well as procurement committees for the purchase of in-kind items. Others remain *ad hoc* and dependent on a small group of volunteers.[721](#) In the Al Gereif neighbourhood

of Khartoum, ERR volunteers have reportedly managed to [restore](#) lights in 70 % of the neighbourhood through the installation of solar panels. Other ERR programming has reportedly restored power to 40 000 people in Bahri. An energy researcher interviewed by Ayin reported that the efforts of the ERRs dwarf those of the government.[722](#)

In April 2026, a technical report for the Khartoum electricity authority revealed an unprecedented electricity crisis marked by a severe power shortage that has disrupted supply across the country. According to the report, electricity production was operational with an estimated shortfall of approximately 3 300 megawatts, largely attributed to the near-total shutdown of thermal generation units reliant on imported fuel and petroleum products.[723](#) As of April 2026, Sudan's worsening electricity and fuel crisis was disrupting everyday life in Khartoum, forcing households to rely on candles, firewood, and long waits at gas stations, while also driving up transport and food costs.[724](#)

The presence of unexploded ordnances in some areas also pose serious risks.[725](#) According to a report from August 2025, the presence of landmines has been confirmed at multiple locations in Khartoum, including anti-personnel mines in Mogran and anti-vehicle mines in Omdurman and Bahri.[726](#)

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