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Arts Generate Action When Politics Fail: Georgetown Qatar Draws Attention to Catastrophe at “Seeing Sudan” Conference



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*Doha, Qatar — September 18, 2025—*While the world averts its eyesy from the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) opened its *Hiwaraat* conference season with an urgent reminder: See Sudan Now. In the face of stalled political solutions, the university offered an alternative approach: create a historic gathering of Sudanese creatives to call attention to the crisis

through other means.

The three-day conference, “Seeing Sudan: Politics through Art,” attended by H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, chairperson of Qatar Museums, H.E. Lolwah Al Khater, Minister of Education and Higher Education, and H.E. Sheikh Dr. Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani, Chairman of Media City Qatar began by confronting the erasure of Sudan’s ongoing tragedy. During the welcome, Sudanese Professor at GU-Q, Dr. Rogaia Abusharaf highlighted the contribution of artists to Sudan’s political consciousness, saying: “‘Seeing Sudan’ represents our effort to discuss the soul of a nation... Sudanese people have been locked in daily battles for survival for decades, and any prospects for even a semblance of normalcy have been systematically destroyed.”

Dean Safwan Masri added: “At a world-leading school of foreign service, art rightfully claims its place as one of the languages of diplomacy. It is why this conference finds its natural home not only at our university but also in Doha, a cosmopolitan city long defined by the cultural richness of its diasporas.”

High-profile Sudanese creatives whose work challenges misrepresentations of the crisis spoke at the keynote panel moderated by Dean Masri. Zeinab Badawi, acclaimed BBC broadcaster, President of SOAS College of London, and author of *An African History of Africa* set the tone for the

event, calling on the audience to recall that “Sudan today is not how it always was...it was once a regional superpower.” She called on the long history of enlightened civilization in Sudan as a guiding light saying: “We cannot allow the forces who are trying to quell these miraculous individuals to be victorious.”

Prolific political cartoonist and GU-Q Artist-in-Residence Khalid Albaih, multidisciplinary artist and art historian Dr. Rashid Diab, and journalist and author Nesrine Malik joined Badawi on stage discussing *What does it mean to see Sudan truthfully in an age of distraction and denial?* Their testimonies laid bare the gap between perception and reality, exposing how the ongoing catastrophe not only destroys lives but also distorts narratives of identity, history, and hope.

The evening closed with a haunting performance by Sudanese singer Alsarah and Palestinian musician Huda Asfour, whose reimagining of music from Sudan’s revolutionary history offered a reminder that the arts can generate solidarity and action when politics fail.

At a moment when the global community risks normalizing Sudan’s urgent crisis through indifference, *Seeing Sudan: Politics through Art* asserts that the stories of the Sudanese people will not be silenced. The conference continues over the next two days, pressing scholars, artists, and the public to confront not only the brutality of the present but also the responsibility of imagining a just future.

On Friday, the Four Seasons Hotel in Doha will host panel discussions on global artistic and intellectual production, leading into the opening of the *Sudan Retold* exhibition at Alhosh Gallery on the Pearl, open to the public through 28 September. The conversations return to the Four Seasons on Saturday, bringing together reporters, anthropologists, designers, musicians, and filmmakers, and concluding with a forward-looking panel on “Reimagining Sudan.”