



Volume 3 • Issue: 1 • January 2023 • pp. 151-154

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE SUDANESE TURKISH RELATIONSHIP

Nadir Yousif Eltayeb
Sudan Ambassador to Ankara

Sudan and Türkiye enjoy strong and deep ties that goes back to the year 1555 AD when the eastern part of Sudan was ruled by the Ottoman Empire, and they established what is known as the Eyala of Al-Habash which included eastern Sudan and part of the current state of Eritrea, and the capital of that governorate was the city of Suakin. The diplomatic representation between Sudan and Türkiye started right after the independence of the Sudan in 1957 when Türkiye opened its embassy in Khartoum, and Sudan established its first diplomatic mission in Ankara in 1981 and the same year witnessed the first visit of a Sudanese president to Türkiye.

The great impact of the Turkish engagement with Sudan is more noticeable in agriculture, crafts, industrial professions, health and medical services as well as food culture, and language. Both Sudan and Türkiye enjoy strategic geopolitical location, which give them an instrumental role regionally, and globally, while Sudan represent a gate way to Africa and links central East Africa, with Asia and Middle East, Türkiye also links Europe to Asia and Middle East.

This fact necessitates more coordination and co-operation between them. Since Türkiye is genuinely planning to strengthen its political and economic cooperation with Africa. Sudan will always remain the best gateway. Both Countries are active member of OIC, and the UN, they share similar values and principles that call for Justice, peace and respect for human rights, and real reform for the international order. They also share similar values and principles on global issues like, illegal human trafficking, terrorism, and climate change.

The bilateral relations between the two countries are governed by excellent mechanisms, starting from the presidential level, there is high council for strategic cooperation which is chaired by the two presidents established in 2018, then the 2 political consultation committee, of the two foreign ministries, and the economic cooperation committee, which is chaired by the vice president of Türkiye and the prime Minister of the Sudan, and include many Ministries; also there is a joint business council representing the private sector. Apart from that there are many bilateral agreements covering areas, of trade investment, education, health, and tourism. Agriculture sector is one of the promising areas of co-operation between the two countries, Sudan is endowed with vast fertile land amounts to 73 million hectares and diversified water resources (ground water, rains, rivers), and good climate, is capable of feeding the whole region, if these resources are well utilized.

Türkiye is an advanced agricultural country, with an advanced technology and well trained human resources; A genuine partnership between the two countries in the field of Agriculture will help to narrow the food gap worldwide. Türkiye made a very good step towards strengthening co-operation in agriculture by establishing a branch for Ziraat Bank in Khartoum the first in Africa. On 20 January 2023, the two countries signed a Memorandum Of Understanding, on co-operation in agriculture by establishing a pilot project in Sudan in an area of 24,000 hectares. This project will encourage the Turkish private sector to invest heavily on agriculture and agro industry in the Sudan. What further enhances these excellent relations between the two countries; is people to people interaction. There are more than eleven thousand Sudanese citizens

in Türkiye, nearly to four thousands are students studying in Turkish universities and institutes in various scientific fields. Also hundreds of Turkish citizens live in Sudan; some of them are students, or investors or workers in both Sudanese and Turkish companies, which have added big value towards strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. In addition, there are also many marriages on both sides, which consolidate the bonds, and the social communication.

Both countries also exchange scientific scholarships and training programs in different fields especially in post graduate studies, there are more than 200 post graduate 3 Sudanese students in different fields which represent one of the positive aspects of cooperation in this field, likewise; there are a lot of Turkish students study in different Sudanese universities. Health sector also plays great role in enhancing the bilateral relations; thanks to the health protocol signed between the two countries, through which a number of Sudanese get opportunities for free treatment in Türkiye and also doctors from both sides benefit from mutual training opportunities.

On the other hand, Türkiye established Neyala hospital in west Darfur and Kalakla hospital in Khartoum as sign of the constructive friendship between the two countries. The tourism sector also represent positive sign in development of bilateral relations between the two countries, the projects that were implemented by TICA such as the rehabilitation of Sultan Ali Dinar Palace in Alflashir in North Darfur state beside the rehabilitation of Suakin Island in eastern Sudan, emphasizes the importance of this field in the course of bilateral relations especially as it helps in strengthening the economy of Sudan. In trade sector; there are a lot of companies from both sides working in Sudan and Türkiye to increase the rate of trade between the two countries. The mutual trade still below the expectations for the people of the two countries as the volume of trade has reached 500 million US dollar, although Sudan and Türkiye are bound by a trade agreement that should encourage trade, and the two countries are working hard to reach 2\$ billion of volume of trade very soon.

With the security and military challenges the world is facing today in light of the growing internal, regional and international conflicts, the desire

to strengthen relations between the two countries in this important aspect emerges. The cooperation is moving forward between the two countries in order to ensure security and stability at the internal levels. Also to strengthen relations, it is necessary to continue joint work in the relevant fields, such as cooperation in fighting terrorism, and human trafficking. In conclusion, one would like to emphasize that, the Sudanese Turkish relations are making good progress, and moving forward slowly but confidently, there are some external factors that negatively affected the level of co-operation during the last few 4 years. Including, Covid 19, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the global economic crisis. The complexity of the transitional period in the Sudan, needs more understanding and continuous support from the Turkish side, meanwhile, the Turkish private sector is invited to make more courageous steps, and get involved in direct investment, in the Sudan, especially in the fields of Agriculture, mining, oil and gas, and renewable energy sectors.