

## **Northern Sudan State: Peaceful protesters brutally dispersed in Abu Saar village while advocating against toxic gold mining**

On 5 May 2024, a group of Sudanese Police Forces (SPF) in Elbragig locality in Northern Sudan State forcefully dispersed peaceful protesters in Abu Saar village. The forces used tear gas, batons and guns to disperse the crowd. The security forces also battered several protesters many of whom sustained injuries such as broken limbs. At least 30 protesters were arrested both during the protest and during house raids after the protest. Eight detainees were released the following day on 6 May 2024 without charges.

On 4 May 2024, a day before the protest, a group representing the residents/locals of Abu Saar village met with the Director of the Elbragig locality who informed them that the forces present in the locality were not under his supervision therefore he could not direct them to not to interfere with the protest. The group then proceeded to meet with the Police director in charge of security in the locality and informed him about the protest that had been organized by the residents of Abu Saar village to advocate against the devastating effects of the Cyanide chemical used in gold mining by a gold mining company in the village i.e Daglo Mining Company Limited. Some of the effects include; waste products (containing Cyanide) left over when gold has been extracted seeping into the water supply and farmland which can lead to disease. Poisoning can result in lung and kidney damage and can also cause miscarriages. Additionally, the soil damage can involve changes in salinity and chemical content which can lead to dryness and destruction of plant coverage. The poison can also lead to deaths and stillbirths among livestock.

### **Background**

The Daglo company board of directors previously included two Turkish citizens, three Sudanese citizens; one who was previously convicted and later released in February 2021 and two former National Congress Party leaders i.e Mr. Alabbs Hassan Al-Bashir, a brother to the former president Omer Al-Bashir and Mr. Sulaf Eldien Salaih, a former DDR Commissioner who passed away three years ago. However, after the ousting of former president Al-Bashir, the company underwent some changes such as the admission of new directors and board members to include those affiliated to RSF and the Turkish members were replaced by Saudi Arabian nationals.

In 2017, the residents of Abu Saar first complained about the company's acts of trespass on land belonging to the locals living around the mines by fixing water pumps and disposing of water containing the poisonous Cyanide chemical. The locals also requested that the mining company be transparent by involving them (the locals) in any discussions that may potentially affect them. After several meetings, the parties reached an agreement and the mining company agreed to desist from the acts of trespass. However, this was short-lived because the mining company quickly resumed the violations. The residents delegated a representative to meet with the company representatives and present their grievances. The mining company agreed to hire experts to investigate the effects of Cyanide on humans, plants, and livestock but the outcome of the investigation was never published.

In 2021, a group of experts from River Nile University visited the area and collected samples which were taken for testing. It was discovered that Cyanide was poisonous and the experts

recommended that the mining company suspend its work and substitute the Cyanide with another chemical.

Later in 2021, the group representing the residents of Abu Saar village traveled to Khartoum and met with the acting Minister of Minerals, and submitted their grievances. After the meeting, the acting Minister directed that the mining company dispose of its waste at least 25 kilometers from the village. The company agreed to the terms but asked for a grace period of 24 months to implement the directive. The parties (company and representatives of the residents) then signed a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U) at the office of the minister of minerals. The Minister then adopted the M.O.U as a resolution vide number 18/2021. The minister also formed a committee to look into the effects of gold mining Representatives from the Supreme Council for the Environment, Geological Research Authority, Sudanese Mineral Resources Company, and Representatives from the Northern state. Unfortunately, the grace period lapsed without any action from the mining company prompting the residents to then take legal action. The court decided the matter in favor of the residents but the company then appealed in the Court of Appeal in Karima town in North Sudan State.

On 29 April 2024, a group of security personnel were seen around the water pump area. Out of curiosity, the residents approached the area to inquire whether the security personnel were there to implement the court orders but they were met with aggression i.e they were beaten, arrested, and detained.

The representative group from the village later traveled to Dongal town to meet with the Governor of Northern Sudan State to report the incident. The governor denied deploying the said security personnel to the area but promised to investigate and give feedback the following day. However, during their second meeting, the Governor diverted from the main issue and instead discussed other irrelevant issues such as the need for the Northern Sudan State to generate money to purchase weapons for the popular forces. The delegation responded and informed the Governor that with everything that was going on in the village, arming the residents to participate in the ongoing conflict alongside SAF would only worsen the situation. The delegation returned to the village and informed the residents about the unfruitful meeting with the Governor and together they agreed to hold a peaceful protest scheduled for 5 May 2024 to raise their issues to the public. On the morning of 5 May 2024, both the Police Director and the Military Intelligence Unit of Elbragig informed the protesters that they would not interfere with the protest and advised them to keep in the designated area (the square). However, a few hours later, the forces aggressively attacked the protesters.

### **Names of the detainees**

1. Abdul Hadi Sheikh Elden (m)
2. Abu Zaid Mohamed Bushra (m)
3. Adil Sharaf Elden (m)
4. Ahmed Kamal Mukhtar (m)
5. Amir Abdul Raheem (m)
6. Amro Mohamed Fakery (m)
7. Ashraf Ahmed (m)

8. Awed Abdul Mutaal (m)
9. Ayoub Saeed (m)
10. Bakhit Abul Bakhit (m)
11. Elsheikh Abdul Mohsen (m)
12. Fairey Taha
13. Fakhir Abdul Kareem (m)
14. Haytham Jafar(m)
15. Hussien Jabir (m)
16. Izzat Kurdi (m)
17. Mahboob Badri (m)
18. Mazin Mohamed (m)
19. Moaied Badri (m)
20. Mohamed Al-Haj (m)
21. Mohamed Hasheem (m)
22. Monawer Mursi (m)
23. Murad Majdi (m) a medical doctor. He was beaten and arrested at the clinic while he was attending to those who had sustained injuries at the protest.
24. Odmn Mahboob Osman (m)
25. Shams Elden Osman Abdon (m)
26. Suraj Muard (m)
27. Wail Al imam (m)
28. Wesam Al-Shareef (m)
29. Zahir Mohamed Amin (m)
30. Zuhair Mohamed Al-Hadi (m)