

**AFRICAN CENTRE
FOR JUSTICE AND
PEACE
STUDIES**



A REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' SITUATION IN SUDAN

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Sudan has undergone significant political and social changes following the April 15 War, along with severe human rights challenges. Amid these developments, the role of human rights defenders becomes a key pillar in protecting fundamental rights and freedoms and strengthening human rights principles and values. Human rights defenders play an independent and crucial role in monitoring violations and oppression carried out by parties to the conflict against civilians. Human rights defenders, however, face grave danger and tragic conditions, with shrinking spaces for personal safety, difficulties in movement and safe work, and exposure to mutilation, arrests, killings, displacement, and unjust trials.

This report aims to shed light on the situation of human rights defenders in Sudan during the armed conflict that has extended from April 2023 to date, with a focus on the threats and violations faced by activists, volunteers, and humanitarian, health, and human rights workers. The report is based on field reports and direct testimonies from victims and witnesses, as well as information monitored by a documentation team that adheres to confidentiality to ensure the safety of sources.

Several Sudanese states, including Khartoum, Al-Jazeera, White Nile, and Darfur, have seen an increase in violations against human rights defenders, such as arbitrary arrests, harassment, surveillance, threats, hate speech, and defamation through traditional and social media, as well as torture, abductions, and unfair trials that lack due process. This has occurred alongside the collapse of state institutions, security and judicial systems, and the rise of rhetoric involving treason and intimidation in the media, creating a hostile environment for human rights and humanitarian work.

These violations reflect a systematic policy aimed at silencing independent voices and dismantling community solidarity networks during a critical time in Sudan's history. Therefore, the report urges international and regional organizations to take immediate action to protect human rights defenders, conduct independent investigations, and hold perpetrators accountable for these violations.



Figure 1: Photo Source: Getty Images

PATTERNS OF VIOLATIONS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders in Sudan face multiple targeted attacks aimed at silencing them and restricting their activities. These include direct threats and harassment, such as surveillance, anonymous communications, and defamation through media and social media, as well as arbitrary arrests and detention in poor conditions without legal justification. There have also been reports of physical assault and abduction of activists and volunteers, along with forced displacement and denial of access to their work areas. Some defenders have been subjected to unfair trials lacking fundamental judicial guarantees, with convictions serving to use the judiciary as a tool of intimidation. These strategies seek to dismantle civil society and create a new reality in which community oversight and human rights work are suppressed.

TARGETED KILLINGS

Since the start of the conflict in April 2023, many human rights defenders and volunteers have been intentionally killed because of their involvement in humanitarian work and civil society efforts, disrupting humanitarian services. The most notable documented cases include the following:

- i. Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Kodi, a lawyer and human rights defender, was killed on May 10, 2023. Mr. Khamis Arbab Ishaq, a lawyer and director of the Peace Center for Legal Aid, was killed on May 16, 2023.
- ii. Mr. Al-Sadig Mohamed Ahmed, a lawyer and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner in West Darfur, was killed on June 15, 2023.
- iii. Mr. Tariq Yaqoub Al-Malik, a lawyer and head of the West Darfur Bar Association, was killed on June 16, 2023.

ix.Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Kodi was killed and burned inside his home after receiving previous death threats from the Rapid Support Forces in downtown El Geneina.

x.Mr. Khamis Arbab was killed during the events in El Geneina (between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces). He had also received previous death threats from the Rapid Support Forces.



“Figure 2: The illustration represents the tragedy of enforced disappearance, created by Israa, an artist and human rights activist.”

ii.Mr. Al-Sadig Mohamed Ahmed and Mr. Tariq Yaqoub were also killed in El Geneina after receiving prior death threats from the Rapid Support Forces. It is worth noting that all of these lawyers are from El Geneina and are human rights defenders. They were members of the Krindig Events Investigation Committee and had accused the Rapid Support Forces of launching attacks on the Krindig camp for displaced persons in El Geneina.

i.Ahmed Abdullah Al-Lord and Adam Omar Jad Al-Rab, an employee of an organization, were kidnapped in front of their home in the Airport neighborhood of Nyala on the Nyala-El Fasher Road. They were taken by armed men riding in an "Obama" Land Cruiser, wearing Rapid Support Forces uniforms, and armed with M16 rifles.

ii.Mr. Najm Al-Din Al-Shaher was kidnapped and arrested by Rapid Support Forces in the East Nile region of Haj Youssef.

iii.Rapid Support Forces killed nine medical personnel from Relief during their attack on the Zamzam camp for internally displaced persons.

iv.Five World Food Program employees were killed on June 6. No charges have been filed against any party.

INTIMIDATION, THREATS, AND HARASSMENT:

Human rights defenders face threats and harassment designed to create fear and psychological stress. These tactics include constant surveillance, threatening messages, and smear campaigns through media and social media, which pressure defenders to limit or stop their work. This targeting seeks to silence their voices and establish a new political environment without defenders.

Victims' Testimonies

i.Mr. Adel (pseudonym) is a member of the Emergency Room team.

"I work with the emergency room in the South Belt area. The situation in South Belt has changed dramatically since the armed forces entered, and it is no longer what it used to be. We, honestly, have no issues with the armed forces as an organization, but the main problem comes from the "Islamist cells" within these forces. They see us as "revolutionaries" linked to the Forces of Freedom and Change, even though most of us are entirely independent and not affiliated with any political parties or groups

Since the start of the war, we have committed ourselves to serving the local citizens and have made substantial efforts in that direction. However, over time, strict restrictions have been imposed. Currently, we no longer operate as emergency rooms to avoid risk. Instead, we are functioning covertly as a volunteer organization to ensure our safety.

We have also encountered challenges from a group called the "Popular Resistance," mostly members of the National Congress Party who consider us revolutionaries connected to the Forces of Freedom and Change. This group believes all emergency rooms are hotspots for the Rapid Support Forces, and according to them, the revolution is a serious threat. They don't want any revolutionaries or emergency rooms involved in the Sudanese scene right now.

The threats we faced were not always direct, but they were clear, whether through words or veiled phrases with threatening connotations. To break this deadlock, we began working with a volunteer organization. We distributed food baskets provided by the World Food Program (WFP). One day, our center was raided by members of the Popular Resistance and other regular forces, even though we had been providing this service for more than six months.

The commission and the local authority told us at the time, "Before, there was no law, but now there is a new law, and you should not continue to operate under the name Emergency Rooms." However, we don't care about the name, as long as we can provide services to citizens. The important thing is that our efforts are not wasted.

The threat this time was more direct as we were called "Janjaweed" and threatened to be shot in the head. Naturally, we felt scared afterward. We tried to avoid any conflict with them, and the room's name was removed from public view, while activities on its social media page were halted to keep the team working locally safe.

These threats and restrictions affected everyone working in the humanitarian field, even though our presence in the area only coincided with the Rapid Support Forces' takeover, and we had no connection to them.

We believe there is no issue with the government intervening to regulate our work, but we reject the baseless and unjustified accusations leveled against us.

Later, a decision was issued by the Governor of Khartoum restricting the work of the emergency rooms. This decision was first enforced in the eastern states, then in the Karari area of Omdurman. Our colleagues in those areas were not working on behalf of the rooms either, fearing they would be targeted, especially since the government and army had been present there since the beginning of the war.

Currently, we are operating Takaya, but we may stop at any time. In the past, organizations sent funds directly to the finance departments of the rooms, which managed the purchasing and distribution for the kitchens. For example, we oversee 42 kitchens in the region, and the funds were transferred to the region's finance department, then to the various sectors responsible for purchasing. However, after the Governor's decision, the funds no longer arrive directly but instead go through a government agency called the Humanitarian Action Commission (HAC), which then transfers the funds directly to the merchant from whom we receive the supplies. This reflects a significant restriction on how we can operate.

Our current options are either to register with the Humanitarian Action Commission or to cease operations. Despite these challenges, we continue to provide a wide range of humanitarian services. For example, at the start of the war, we delivered food supplies to displaced people in central Khartoum. We later launched a mobile pharmacy, which remains operational today because some people cannot afford medicine. We also established a health center that offers free services, and it is still running.

Our work also extended to running kitchens and Takayas, which continue to operate today despite the complexity of the situation caused by new parties entering the scene. We also worked to restart some wells that had been shut down due to fuel shortages, and we aimed to provide the necessary supplies to operate them, even if only for one day, so that people could access water...

i.Mr. Mohammed (pseudonym)

“In Al-Jazeera State, especially in rural areas and Hasahisa locality, we witnessed widespread violations by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). These included looting, arrests, sexual violence, and targeting activists and humanitarian workers. Community initiatives, particularly group kitchens led by both women and men, were also restricted, and some activists faced threats and persecution, creating a climate of fear and secrecy in civil society work at that time.

Despite the withdrawal of the RSF and the military's control of the area, the situation remains fragile. Security threats still exist, especially from individuals within the military. Civil society organizations face restrictions from various sources, and the official response to humanitarian needs is weak, while activists lack any form of protection. Despite everything, we continue our work amid significant challenges, most notably limited funding and indirect persecution by security agencies.

I participated in various humanitarian activities, such as documenting violations and providing aid and psychological support to those in need. However, one fateful day, a member of the army with the rank of warrant officer (S/O) issued a clear threat when he told me and my colleagues, "If they hear us say a single word, publish a post, or send information to an outsider, we will never see our families again." These words explicitly referred to the possibility of our being kidnapped or killed.

The person who issued this threat was an army soldier living near us. This threat deeply affected my family; anxiety spread through the house, and family gatherings turned into constant debates about whether I should stop volunteer work and start a business with my father. My mother repeatedly voiced her worries about the danger I might face, especially since she knew my strong dedication to this work and my refusal to accept what she called "the squabbling and ridiculous decisions of the ruling authorities." In the end, we agreed that I would delete all my posts on social media in exchange for continuing my volunteer efforts, but more cautiously and discreetly.

It's worth noting that this was not the first threat I faced. Previously, during the control of the Rapid Support Forces, I was compelled to travel to Gedaref State after threats escalated, while many of my colleagues, all displaced from the same city, were arrested. Now, I receive no support and continue to work under difficult and complex conditions..."



Figure 3: Photo Credit: Getty Images

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i.Mr. Ahmed (pseudonym)

Ahmed begins his account by describing what is happening in his area: "After the cholera outbreak spread among the population and the lack of adequate care, I contacted some individuals who were actively working to provide first aid to the injured and transport them to hospitals for necessary treatment. These activists were monitored, arrested, and later interrogated for allegedly spreading false information about the outbreak. They were also detained, flogged, and forced to withdraw the posts and information they had posted on social media. I consider what happened to them a clear and blatant violation of their rights as activists working for the benefit of the people. Furthermore, we are experiencing a worrying security situation, with daily incidents of theft, from theft of money and phones to the snatching of women's handbags in the streets. This is in addition to repeated threats and accusations of belonging to the Janjaweed forces, all as a result of the random proliferation of weapons everywhere." I work in the fields of protection and psychological support, and I have gained experience working with more than three international and national organizations, including my current one, which is active in providing humanitarian aid during wartime emergencies. Recently, I was working in the Al-Fula area of West Kordofan State, where I served as the Protection Project Coordinator. The area was under a severe siege, and our offices in the Customs neighborhood were raided. During the attack, the attackers found my identification card, which showed my position as Protection Coordinator. I was accused of working for the security or police, and I became a target and was wanted by armed groups in the area. Thanks to the assistance of residents, I was smuggled out of the area to Al-Obeid, then to Wad Madani, and finally to Port Sudan, until I settled in Omdurman. However, even in Omdurman, the authorities found out that I was an employee in the Protection Department, and they stipulated that I continue my humanitarian work on the condition that I not discuss protection issues or handle referral and legal support cases. In my opinion, the Rapid Support Forces are behind the targeting in West Kordofan, while in Omdurman, the current authorities' security and intelligence agencies are monitoring me.

This targeting has deeply affected me psychologically, as I am constantly fearful and feel as if I am being watched, even during meetings or when talking to beneficiaries. I feel monitored all the time, even while sleeping, because I fear being unexpectedly called in for investigation over cases I am not connected to. This has also impacted my fieldwork, as I find it difficult to speak out or document the violations I witness firsthand, since everyone now carries a weapon. The environment is no longer safe or suitable for human rights work.

As a result of the threats, I had to change my residence. After the attack on our offices in West Kordofan, I thought about fleeing to South Sudan via Abyei, then to Kampala. However, because of the tight siege, I chose to escape to El Obeid with the help of a trusted local man. At that time, I felt that my life and mental health were under serious threat. To this day, I haven't received any form of support, psychological, legal, or protective. I have had to rely solely on myself to get through these hardships. I turned to reading the Quran, listening to music, and avoiding the news altogether to reduce my stress.

i.Mr. Osman (pseudonym)

Osman, an activist from Gedaref State, says that the targeting and security persecution of activists in the state have become a systematic and ongoing practice over recent times. He describes the situation as security agencies imposing strict surveillance on anyone they see as hostile. This surveillance includes arrests, threats, and even the use of legal provisions to criminalize expressing opinions, especially on social media. There is also a clear restriction on volunteer work, with direct security oversight imposed on such activities.

Osman mentions that although his involvement in public work is limited, he has been personally summoned, searched, and followed several times. These actions have disrupted his daily life and made him feel constantly watched. He explains that the targeting isn't just directed at activists or politicians; it also includes people with no direct role in public activities, simply because of their ethnic or geographic background. He recounts that his information was recently recorded without any apparent reason. Since then, he has felt that his movements are being closely monitored, especially near his home. This suspicion was confirmed when a colleague, who was with him, was also followed, and their information was collected together.

He describes the effects of this targeting as comprehensive: psychological, on the ground, and even at the family level. He says, "Any threat to me personally can directly result in reduced movement and fear of exploitation or blackmail, even by a family member, because anything is possible."

Despite these challenging circumstances, he confirms that he receives no support, whether psychological, legal, or protection-related, and bears the consequences of this situation alone.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE:

Arbitrary arrests and detentions are used as practical tools to suppress human rights defenders by arresting them without clear legal justification and holding them in inhumane conditions. This hinders their activities and poses a direct threat to their freedom and safety. This approach aims to eliminate the presence of defenders in the political and human rights landscape and to create a new political reality that seeks to silence them.

Several Sudanese cities conducted arrest campaigns in May 2025, targeting volunteers, activists, and human rights defenders. This shows a pattern of systematically targeting civil and humanitarian efforts without due process or formal charges, clearly violating international standards.



Figure 4: Figure 2: The illustration represents the tragedy of enforced disappearance, created by Israa



Figure 5: Photo Credit: Getty Images

CHRONOLOGY OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION



Incidents of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances

On May 25 and 26, three volunteers from the East Nile Emergency Room, Mr. Mujahid Awad, Mr. Tariq Adel, and Mr. Samir Ibrahim, were detained by security forces and then taken to the Security Cell office in the Nasr neighborhood without notifying their families or pressing any charges. The detainees were known for their humanitarian work supporting health centers and hospices since the start of the war, unrelated to any political activities. Reports surfaced that they had been transferred to an unknown location.

In Kadugli, South Kordofan, a series of arrests started on May 3, targeting six members of the Resistance Committees and the Sudanese Professionals Association, including Mr. Ahmed Faisal, Mr. Hassan Bulandia, and Mr. Musa Abdullah. Dr. Ammar Abdullah and three other volunteers were later detained, and on May 12, Mr. Musab Osman Al-Nour and Asim Ahmed were arrested without a judicial warrant.

On May 15, engineer Mr. Azahir Adam Dahiya Hamidan was detained outside his workplace at Jasmar organization. This was part of broader, arbitrary administrative actions, including the suspension by the Humanitarian Aid Commission of the activities of over 30 national and international organizations. These measures have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the city, which hosts thousands of displaced persons.

On May 21, activist Mr Ahmed Nasr Al-Tijani was arrested in the Abu Jubeiha market after a Facebook post criticizing the Bara Brigades. The reason for his arrest remains unknown. Security forces in Merowe also arrested journalist Munir al-Tariki from his home in Nouri, Northern State. He is a writer for the Alrakoba website and has worked as a cultural editor for several newspapers.

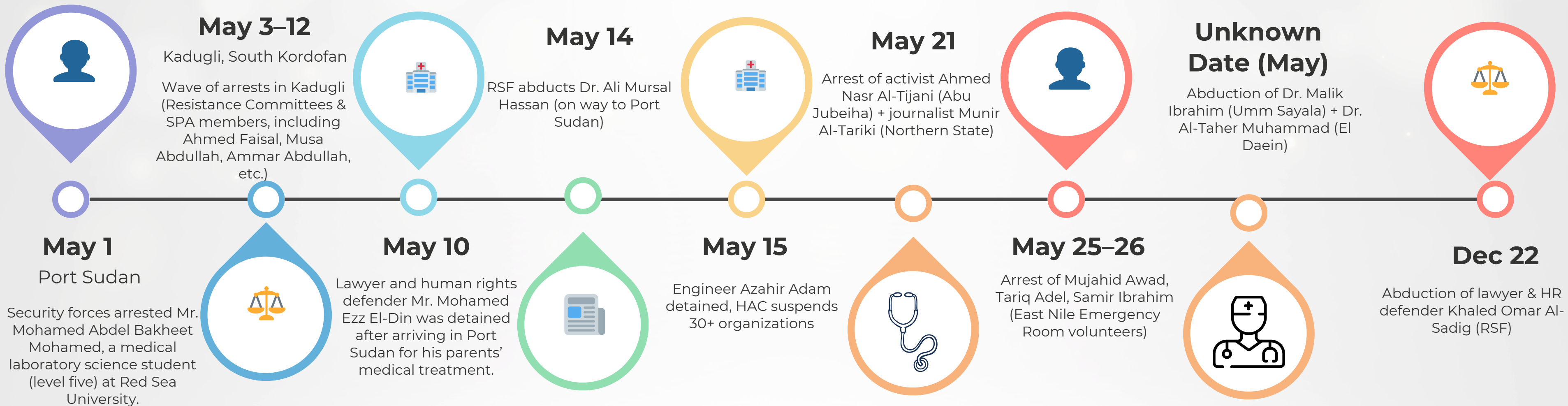
On May 14, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) abducted Dr. Ali Mursal Hassan while traveling from Tina to Port Sudan to take the MPs' exam.

On May 1, security forces in Port Sudan arrested Mr. Mohamed Abdel Bakheet Mohamed, a medical laboratory science student at Red Sea University (level five). Additionally, on May 10, lawyer and human rights defender Mohamed Ezz El-Din was detained after arriving in Port Sudan for his parents' medical treatment, putting him and his family at significant risk due to his arbitrary detention.

RSF forces abducted Dr. Malik Ibrahim from his workplace in Umm Sayala, North Kordofan, and his whereabouts remain unknown. Al-Tahir Muhammad Fadlallah, an internal medicine specialist at El Daein Hospital and a professor at the Faculty of Medicine at El Daein University, was taken from his home by an armed group affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces. His location is still unknown. The abduction and enforced disappearance of lawyer and human rights defender Khaled Omar Al-Sadig by the Rapid Support Forces on December 22, 2024.

These cases demonstrate the widespread targeting of various actors in civil society and the humanitarian field, in complete disregard for basic legal safeguards.

SUDAN: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS – KEY INCIDENTS TIMELINE



ABUSE OF RULE OF LAW

The law has been used as a tool to intimidate human rights defenders by filing politically motivated criminal charges and subjecting them to prolonged detention without trial.

In eastern Sudan, lawyer and human rights defender Mr. Montaser Abdallah was detained in Port Sudan prison for nearly eight months without being brought to trial. He was arrested for his work on political complaints by the National Security Services before being handed over to the Public Prosecution, which filed a criminal complaint against him. Despite being charged, he has not been brought before any court, reflecting the ongoing use of criminal justice tools as a means of intimidation, in clear violation of international fair trial standards and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

VIOLATIONS AGAINST WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN SUDAN DURING THE ARMED CONFLICT

This section of the report features testimonies from several Sudanese women human rights defenders who have experienced serious violations during the war in Sudan since April 2023, both directly and while carrying out their humanitarian, human rights, and legal work. The report highlights patterns of gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests, threats, surveillance, forced displacement, and defamation.

Documented Violations

Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Violence

Testimony from Ms. M.M. shares a deeply personal story. She recounts an experience in Omdurman, University District, where she faced complex challenges, including being subjected to sexual harassment by Janjaweed members inside her home, experiencing physical harassment at checkpoints, having her property stolen, being forced to flee her family, and suffering violence rooted in tribal identity (Ma'alia - East Darfur). These traumatic events have left her with psychological scars, caused displacement, and disrupted her sense of security and her ability to continue her activism. Her bravery in sharing her story highlights the ongoing struggles many face.

Legal Threats and Intimidation

Victim: Ms. R.M.
Violation: Violent reports were filed against her by order of the security services, to prosecute her through Interpol.
She received voice threats and blackmail over the phone.
Her name was listed on the "wanted list" in Kassala.
Context: She is involved in legal work that includes monitoring violations, documenting crimes, and sharing this information publicly.

Ms. A.B is a dedicated humanitarian worker frequently traveling through the Nile River region, Gedaref, Singa, and Dinder. She faced serious challenges, including incidents of intelligence persecution, threats with weapons during water and aid distribution, indirect accusations of 'incitement,' and psychological pressure aimed at discouraging her from helping displaced communities.



Arbitrary Arrest and Security Persecution

Ms. Douha Shuaib, a 21-year-old student from Khartoum, now in Ad-Damar, Al-Thawra, faced some serious challenges. She was detained by the Security Cell based on false accusations of collaborating with the Rapid Support Forces, without any evidence. Her detention lasted over three months before her case was finally taken to court, and unfortunately, witness statements were altered without any legal reason. There was also an unjustified delay in the trial process. She was charged with offences that carry the death penalty.

INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION

The following testimonies and statements were gathered directly from victims and human rights defenders from April 2023 to the present. Their content was verified and cross-checked with trustworthy public sources, such as human rights activist pages, organization reports, and official publications. The witnesses' preferences regarding whether to conceal or reveal their identities were respected.

Witness testimonies

i. Ms. Ihsan's testimony: A Doctor - Human Rights Defender

"At the start of the war, I established the Arkwet Emergency Room and worked there until I was displaced to Dongola. After arriving in Dongola, congestion at the crossing increased, and deaths were recorded. This was the main reason I decided to take action and go to the Argeen crossing. I first gathered supplies for the crossing, then officially entered after getting approval from the Ministry of Health and the UNHCR. The security situation at the crossing was challenging, and I was the only woman working there, which exposed me to some harassment. However, I was later joined by a volunteer during the final period.

The experience working in Argeen was challenging and complex, but the initiative was highly successful, with strong media support and participation from major organizations. We published a daily update on the situation until one fateful day when we received warnings to stop. Soldiers continuously monitored all our posts and media content.

After achieving all our goals and successfully supporting the crossing with significant financial help to improve its conditions, we submitted the final report and informed the civilians that we would withdraw from the crossing, as I planned to return to my family in Dongola once the initiative ended. On the last day, military intelligence arrived and arrested the volunteer girl I was with, claiming they had procedures to follow. They brought a car with security personnel and soldiers inside. As I was about to get into the car with her, I realized I still had my phone. I pulled it out to throw it aside, but the intelligence chief grabbed me and took my phone while they drove the girl to Halfa. I stayed in Arqeen under surveillance for 12 hours until they returned my phone the next day in the evening. By then, they had released the girl from Halfa. She was questioned about our work with the resistance committees and our sources of support. They also asked the girl about me. She was released the next morning.

When my family found out what had happened, they demanded that I leave Sudan immediately for Egypt and not return. That was the main reason I went to Egypt. They also threatened us, saying, "Wherever you go, we will catch you." We left the crossing quietly, without drawing attention, and after they released us, we boarded the first bus heading into Egypt..."

i.Ms. Mahasin Ali's Testimony: A lawyer and human rights defender

"I have had the opportunity to work with many human rights centers and organizations, providing training on human rights. A few months after the war, I was displaced from Khartoum to Gezira State with my sick sister. The circumstances there were extremely challenging. Before the conflict, I enjoyed working with human rights organizations as a trainer, leading workshops and traveling to hold seminars, then returning home afterward.

After the war started, the situation in Gezira became tough, so we moved to the Nile River (Atbara). I decided to keep working on my human rights activities. One time, I traveled from the Nile River to Port Sudan using a "Raqsha" (a kind of transportation).

Before boarding, I tried to tell the driver I preferred to sit alone, but I was surprised when a man sat next to me and said, "Peace be upon you," to which I replied, "Peace be upon you." Suddenly, he cut me off and said, "I am from the intelligence service." At that moment, I felt terrified, not just for myself, but for many people, my phone, and the groups of lawyers and human rights defenders I belong to. The man started talking to me about my movements and knew a lot about where I had been, listing all the states I had traveled to. All this happened following my previous trip to Singa to advocate for human rights. We took the long route through Gedaref to Abu Rakham, then entered the Dinder area, heading to Singa. At that moment, the strikes started targeting Singa.

Seeing what was happening, one of the passengers stood up and said to the bus driver not to take us to Singa as it was risky. The driver agreed not to risk so many passengers, so we returned to Dinder, to the same cafeteria from which we had left. We stayed there for three days with elderly people, individuals with diabetes, those with high blood pressure, and children among us. While at the café, I thought of ways to help starving civilians amongst us and decided to find some food and drinks. I also asked one of the girls for help, and we went to the bakery to get bread. We were also able to get beans, drinking water, and biscuits for the children. We prepared sandwiches and shared the little we had.

The next day, the Rapid Support Forces attacked Dinder, shutting down the markets, the bakery where I got bread, the bean shop, and the shop where I bought drinking water and biscuits, as if they wanted people to die of hunger and thirst. This wasn't just targeting me personally, but everyone. This forced us to start fetching water from the sea (even though we knew seawater wasn't sterile, it was better than letting people die of thirst). During this time, several people died. It was a painful scene I'll never forget. One day, as I was carrying water bottles to fill from the sea, a Rapid Support Forces soldier confronted me and pointed his weapon at me. He asked, "Where are you going?" I replied, "To fetch water from the sea." He asked incredulously, "Why?" They often intimidated us with their weapons. I didn't think I would come back alive.

It was clear that I was being targeted as a human rights defender because they saw I was trying to help people. He asked, "What do you have to do with them?!" and started intimidating me with his weapon. We stayed in this situation for three days, until we crossed the bridge to Gedaref, despite the suffering of the elderly and children..."

iii. Testimony of Ms. Douha Shoaib

Douha Shoaib is a 21-year-old student at Nilein University in the Faculty of Arts and lives with her family on Tuti Island in Khartoum. When the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) entered Tuti Island in 2023, she and others managed to escape by boat to Bahri, then traveled to the city of Ad-Damar, where they stayed until October 2024. When the rest of her family was able to flee Tuti Island to the Al-Thawra neighborhood, Douha and her siblings joined them, and they all stayed in a shelter in Al-Thawra. She stayed with her family for two months, and on January 1, 2025, she was arrested by the "Bakrari Security Cell" on charges of collaborating with the RSF.

She stayed in custody for nine days before being transferred to the Public Prosecution, which charged her under Articles 186, 51, 50, and 26 of the Penal Code, offences that carry the potential for the death penalty.

She remained in police custody during the investigation, and her phone was examined. The technical report showed there were no photos, videos, or messages indicating her cooperation with the Rapid Support Forces.

Additional note: She was involved in revolutionary demonstrations and political activism during her studies at the University of Nilein.

Witnesses were interrogated and re-interrogated, during which one of them testified that Douha used to ride with Rapid Support Forces fighters in their cars and sell them drugs. It should be noted that during his initial interrogation, he did not provide any evidence against her. When asked about changing his testimony, he replied, "I was afraid of her family."

Ms. Douha was in detention for over three months before the case was brought before the proper court. During the first session scheduled for April 9, 2025, the judge was not present, causing the hearing to be postponed until April 24. It was later revealed that the judge had been transferred to another city.

Several human rights and support organizations showed interest in her case. They issued statements and posters in solidarity, including: Emergency Lawyers, "No to the Oppression of Women" Initiative, Unified Women's Coordination, Democratic Women's Union, Democratic Lawyers Gathering, and Nilein University Students' Struggle Front.

iv. Testimony of Ms. Rehab Mubarak Sayed Ahmed Saad: a lawyer, human rights defender, and founding member of the Emergency Lawyers Group.

"Since the beginning of the war, I have been working on a weekly monitoring of violations and crimes committed by both parties to the conflict in Sudan (the army and the Rapid Support Forces). I also cooperate directly with the Fact-Finding Committee to provide it with documented violations across Sudan and countries of asylum.

In July 2023, I, along with others, confronted a group of escapees from Sudanese prisons (Ahmed Haroun and Ali Osman) and secured arrest warrants for them from Kassala State. I exposed the state government's cooperation with them and its hesitance to arrest them during a live interview on Al-Hadath TV. I track and document violations against Sudanese civilians and publish all reports on my personal Facebook page. Our group, Emergency Lawyers, also posts its official statements on its human rights pages on Facebook and Twitter.

Challenges faced;

- Parties affiliated with the security apparatus filed a false report against me to have me extradited to Sudan through Interpol (I will attach a copy of the arrest warrants).
- These extremist groups threatened me through audio clips containing blackmail and intimidation tactics.

I am currently in Cairo for legal work, having left Kassala State (my hometown) after learning that my name was on the security wanted list. When they failed to arrest me, they fabricated a report (No. 33310/2024) with the Kassala Central Prosecution Office to extradite me through Interpol..."

v. i. Testimony of Ms. Azeeza from Omdurman , Khartoum State

“I am a human rights advocate and the executive director of a women's empowerment organization. During the war, we stayed in place for three months, during which I assisted people through a food basket program and humanitarian aid. However, with the rise in violations and the increase in rape cases, I attempted to intervene to address them.

One day, while my husband went to buy supplies at the busy Omdurman market, fighters from the Rapid Support Forces raided our house and sexually harassed me (every time I think about the incident, I cry). They touched my breasts and uttered derogatory words in front of my two children. They smashed my phone right in front of me and stole my gold jewelry. I believe that had he been there, things would not have ended this way. After the incident, we decided to escape at night. The journey was difficult and painful.

At the border, we were harassed by the army in various ways. When they asked for our official documents, they inquired if I was from East Darfur, to which I replied, "Yes, I am from the Ma'alia tribe." Luckily, one of the soldiers knew that the Ma'alia were involved in a bitter tribal conflict with the Rapid Support Forces, and we were allowed to cross, but they seized some of our money. We safely arrived in Uganda, and I am currently working with an organization specializing in combating sexual violence. The painful irony of interacting with victims is that I realized my abuse was the "least brutal" of what others have endured...”

vi. Ms. Mona’s testimony (pseudonym)

“I am a political and civil activist from Old Omdurman. Six months before the war started, I worked to raise awareness about social and human rights among children and women. During that time, I received an explicit death threat from the security services, which threw me into a state of extreme fear. I no longer felt safe even at home, and I became afraid to sit or go out alone, which significantly limited my field activities. Later, we moved to a new apartment in Omdurman, but the surveillance continued. I received an indirect message through my husband, who was also threatened, warning me that they knew our new address. The surveillance persisted for a while without direct action, but it was enough to cause daily terror.

As the situation worsened after the outbreak of the war, surveillance continued, and I was forced to leave Omdurman and travel to Gedaref State for my safety. However, this did not stop the persecution; my husband was later arrested and interrogated about my new whereabouts. Even after I arrived in Gedaref, my anxiety did not ease. The security forces kept harassing me, mainly because of the risk of leaks about my location. This caused me to stop all field activities for a long time.”

Mona continues her story, saying, "In Gedaref State, despite the fragile security conditions, I have gradually resumed my work. Today, I continue documenting violations, providing humanitarian aid, and raising awareness within the Women's Emergency Room. However, this does not mean that the challenges have ended. The harassment persists, including threats, accusations of affiliation with parties to the conflict, expedited trials that could lead to the death penalty, and pressure on families to stay silent.

I was persecuted again and had to leave my home state for another to continue. The groups responsible for this targeting are now identified: the security apparatus, the police, and military intelligence, who are now working together under a state of war.

This targeting has deeply affected me psychologically, impacted my fieldwork, and caused great anxiety for my family, who repeatedly asked me to stop my humanitarian and political activities. For a long time, I was forced to work solely by phone, with no on-the-ground action. To this day, I receive no support, no protection, legal or psychological, and I continue on this path alone, with great fear but also determination...”

vii. Ms. Iman’s testimony (pseudonym)

Ms. Iman, an activist and advocate in Gedaref working in humanitarian aid, providing psychological support, and awareness-raising, says that the security situation in the region has worsened significantly after the fall of Wad Madani. It has become evident that there is growing pressure on activists and volunteers. Even those distributing aid, such as food, have become targets for persecution, and more than one person has been arrested while handing out meals. She adds that she has been previously arrested, and recently, specifically two weeks ago, her friend was stopped on the street and told to deliver a threatening and warning message to Ms. Iman. This happened shortly after a security officer took her personal information while she was in the market. She believes this incident marked the beginning of ongoing harassment.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Iman recounts the details, stating that one day, when she was at the market with a friend to buy some groceries. She noticed someone watching them from the moment they entered the market until they left. The next day, when they returned to the market to deliver some items for deportation, they were stopped, their phones were confiscated, and their personal belongings were searched. Their complete information was taken, including details about their extended families and relatives.

She says, "After that particular day, everywhere we went, there was always a cruiser in front of us." She notes that one day, they were filmed by an unknown person, but they couldn't confront him. The next day, her friend visited her at home, but that friend left for the market. She was stopped by a member of the security forces, who called her by name, but she ignored and proceeded to walk. The officer told her that he knew who she was and that she had been at the activist's home. He continued to ask about the reason for her visit and told her, "Tell your friend to leave those QHA [Freedom of Expression] and communists alone."

Iman expresses her concern about this ongoing harassment, saying, "I don't know how long they will pursue me." She notes that the psychological impact of this targeting has been severe, as she feels constantly afraid, as if her every move is being monitored. "If I leave the house, I feel like I'm being followed all the time." Regarding her fieldwork, she has been forced to halt many of her activities.

Despite all these threats and harassment, she has not received any support, whether psychological, legal, or even protection. She was trying to overcome those ordeals by relying on herself only.



Figure 6: Photo Credit: Getty Images

Several human rights defenders reported experiencing psychological exhaustion and feelings of insecurity, and many were forced to scale back their activities or work secretly. In some cases, the targeting led to families being displaced or losing their income sources, especially volunteers at health facilities who work without official support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We call upon the;
 - 1.The Sudanese government and warring parties to;
 - a. Immediately cease targeting human rights defenders, including lawyers, medical workers, and humanitarian workers.
 - b. Commit to protecting civilians and human rights defenders and ensuring that they are not subjected to any violations or harassment.
 - 2.National and international human rights organizations to;
 - a.Offer material and psychological aid to defenders who face threats or attacks.
 - b.Support monitoring and documentation mechanisms and expand international protection for Sudanese defenders.
 - c.Provide training on digital security and personal safety for defenders to ensure their protection while carrying out their duties.
 - 3.To the international community;
 - a.Press the Sudanese government and both parties to the conflict to commit to protecting human rights defenders.
 - b.Include the situation of defenders in Sudan in official international reports.

CONCLUSION

The situation for human rights defenders continues to face significant challenges, including restrictions on freedom of expression, legal prosecutions, defamation, physical threats, and arbitrary arrests, as well as systematic killings. Despite international and regional efforts to protect them, the reality reveals a substantial gap between legal commitments and actual practices on the ground.

Protecting human rights defenders is not just a local or individual responsibility; it is an international obligation that demands governments and the global community take immediate action to create a safe environment where they can carry out their crucial work without fear or threats. Legal protection measures must be reinforced, the role of national institutions must be activated, and international pressure must be increased on those who violate the rights of these defenders.

Finally, discussing progress in the field of human rights is impossible without empowering and safeguarding those who dedicate their lives to defending them. Standing up for human rights is not a crime; it is a moral obligation that must be protected and respected.

