**Sudan: Seven human rights defenders and activists arrested, detained, and allegedly tortured by the SAF Military Intelligence Unit in the Blue Nile Region**

The African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) condemns the continued targeting of human rights defenders for their work in Sudan. ACJPS has documented several incidents where **seven (07)** human rights defenders/activists were arbitrarily arrested detained and allegedly tortured by the SAF Military Intelligence (MI) Unit in Blue Nile region. We urge the Sudanese Army to desist from the repression of human rights defenders and allow them to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association as guaranteed under Sudan's Constitution and international treaties ratified by Sudan.

On 14 January 2024, the Military Intelligence (MI) Unit in Al-damazin, the capital of the Blue Nile Region (BNR) arrested four human rights defenders and activists. The activists hold leadership positions within the local Resistance Committees in Blue Nile. The Committee’s main objective is to provide services to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from other states like Al-Jazeera seeking refuge in Blue Nile Region. The IDPs are being hosted in several facilities including Alnahda school where the initiatives/committees are very active. The activists were arrested from their homes at about 11:20 am and taken to the MI detention center at the SAF headquarters in Al-damazin also known as Division 14 for interrogation. The group was then released at 07:00 P.m later that day. While in detention, the group was threatened and demanded to support SAF during the popular recruitment processes of civilians into the army to fight against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

**Those arrested are;**

1. Baha Eldien Mukhtar (m), a member of the Resistance Committee in the Alnahda neighborhood in Al-damazin.
2. Ahmed Babkir Ismail also known as Jafraf (m), a member of the Resistance Committee in the Alnahda neighborhood in Al-damazin.
3. Alrhman Mohamed Ahmed also known as Jagdol (m), a member of the Resistance Committee in the Alnahda neighborhood in Al-damazin.
4. Abazr Mohamed Elteybe (m), a member Resistance Committee in Alnahda neighborhood in Al-damazin.

On 14 January 2024 at around 11:00 the military intelligence in Al-damazin arrested Mr. Jamal Awad and his colleague Mr. Balah Abdul Gadir from Al-damazin court. The two advocates/human rights defenders were taken to the MI offices for detention. Mr. Balah was previously beaten and arrested on 6 January 2024, together with a group of civilians at a fuel station. Mr. Baha had intervened in a situation where civilians who had queued at the fuel station waiting to be attended to were being beaten by SAF officers in a bid to disperse them.

On 6 January 2024, the Military Intelligence Unit in Al-damazin, Blue Nile arrested Mr. Jamal Awad, a human rights defender and an advocate offering legal aid services to victims of arbitrary arrests. Mr. Awad was arrested while he had gone to interview victims of arbitrary arrests including Mr. Baha and taken to the MI base in Shamar where he was detained. Mr. Awad was allegedly tortured while in detention as he was beaten with gun butts and sustained several injuries. He was transferred to the Chinese Hospital in Al-damazin for medical attention.

On 08 December 2023, Mr. Ahmed Al-Hajji was arrested from his home in Al-damazin by the SAF Military Intelligence Unit. Mr. Ahmed is a human rights defender and advocate working with an organization offering legal aid services. He is also a member of the Sudanese Bar Association in the Blue Nile Region, a member of the Freedom for Change Coalition (FCC) in the Blue Nile Region, and a leader in the UMA National Party. Mr. Ahmed was arrested following his response countering the speech made by a member of the former National Congress Party (NCP) at the neighborhood mosque mobilizing civilians to join the army.

**Other developments**

On 21 November 2023, the Blue Nile Governor, Gen. Ahmed Alomda Badi passed a decree declaring a state of emergency in the Blue Nile Region. However, several localities in the Blue Nile Region including Al-damazin and Wad Almahi have been under a state of emergency since June 2021 following the tribal conflict between the Fong group and the Hausa tribe. Additionally, in December 2022, another state of emergency decree was announced with penalties such as imprisonment for several months for those found guilty of violating it. However, on 6 November 2023, Gen. Alomda issued a resolution ordering for the release of offenders of the emergency decree, and 45 prisoners were resultantly released. Although ACJPS was reliably informed that the resolution came as a result of the dire situation in the prisons, specifically the food and water scarcity due to the war.

On 25 October 2023, the residents of Alserio, a village located in the Blue Nile through a campaign, rejected the recruitment of their people into the army. They accused former NCP members and leaders of spearheading the initiative. They also strongly condemned the violation of women’s and children’s rights. They further called upon the authorities to close the training camps established in their area where recruits are trained. They also called upon the warring parties to bring an end to the war and allow access to humanitarian aid. ACJPS urges the regional and international community to exercise their authority and bring an end to the senseless war.

On 30 December 2023, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement/Northern Sector in Blue Nile Sector led by Mr. Joseph Toka under the general command of Abdul Aziz Adam Al-Hello, launched an attack on Alkurmk town located in East of Al-damazin near the Ethiopian boarder. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) which has base in Alkurmk countered the attack resultantly defeating SPLM/N who retreated back to their base in Yabous located South of Al-damazin. This is third attack by the SPLM/N on Alkurmk town since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan. The June 2023 attack led to displacement of at least 4000 civilians who fled to Ethiopia.

**Background**

On 18 June 2023, the Blue Nile Regional government passed a resolution restricting the movement of the people out of the region unless they obtained a pass (express permission) from the security committee (comprised of representatives from; the SAF MI Unit, Police Force, and National Security) operating at the main bus station in Al-damazin. A reliable source who asked for anonymity informed ACJPS that the resolution was intended to bar those willing to join RSF from leaving the region following the call by Mr. Alobid Mohammed Suleiman Abu Shotal for civilians to join RSF and fight against SAF. Mr. Abu Shotal is the Native Administration leader of the Hamag clan under the umbrella of the Fong Group and a Major General in RSF.

Another reliable source informed ACJPS that even though the Blue Nile regional government supports SAF, the restriction of movement is an extreme way of showing their support as it is an infringement on the rights of the citizens. He added that the establishment of recruitment camping and military training centers in the region makes it a target for RSF. It is also notable that the restrictions target CSO representatives, human rights defenders, and activists. For example, on 24 September 2023, the Humanitarian Aid Commission in Blue Nile suspended the activities of the Al-Etidal Organization after they conducted a three-day campaign against hate speech in the region. The organization is chaired by Mr. Nasur Eldien Mufarih, a former Minister of Religious Affairs and Guidance during the transitional government (before the 25 October 2021 military coup).