

Sudan War: The continued targeting of human rights defenders and activists by security forces

The African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) condemns the continued targeting of human rights defenders for their work in Sudan. ACJPS is also concerned about the physical welfare of detainees given the well-documented use of torture against detainees in detention centers without access to families or lawyers. In this release ACJPS has documented incidents where HRDs have been harassed and arrested for their work by security forces.

On 16 April 2024, the SAF Military Intelligence (MI) Unit in Alobid, North Kordofan State arrested Mr. Abdul Almutlab Alkhateem at a local market known as “The Petrol”. Mr. Abdul is advocate and a member of National Umma Party.

On 15 April 2024, a group of MI officers from the SAF base in Senga town in Senar State, driving Landcruiser vehicles raided Mr. Musab Mohamed Adam’s family home. Mr. Musa is a member of the resistance committee in Abu Hujar. Although Mr. Musa was not home at the time of the raid, the officers arrested his two brothers namely; Adam Makawi Mohamed Adam an advocate and Almegdad Mohamed Adam a student. After the raid, the officers ordered Mr. Adam’s father to hand Mr. Adam to their base in exchange for his two other sons. Reasons why they were looking to arrest Mr. Adam are unknown.

On 7 April 2024, at around 02:00 Am a group of masked armed men who only identified themselves as security officers (but did not specify from which forces) raided Mr. Ali Tariw Al- Arsh’s home in Senga town, Senar State. But because Mr. Tariq was not home, the group went ahead and arrested his brother (Mr. Suhib Al-Arah) instead. Mr. Suhib Al-Arah is an advocate and HRD. Mr. Tariq’s whereabouts are still unknown.

On 3 April 2024, at around 03:30 pm, Dr. Nizar Abu Zaid, a human rights defender was arrested by three unknown armed men while he was visiting an office in Libya market located in Kosti, White Nile State. Dr. Nizar was called by a friend requesting to be driven home. He quickly left home to his friend’s aid. Several hours later, Dr. Nizar did not return home, and his mobile phones were switched off, causing his family to worry. They searched for him at hospitals, police stations, the National Security Office, and the Military Intelligence Office in vain.

The family then resorted to publishing a missing person's advert on social media. The advert was widely spread by family members, friends, and other human rights defenders. On 6 April 2024, at around 07:00 p.m., Dr. Nizar's family received a phone call from an unknown caller who only identified himself as Colonel. The “Colonel” informed them that Dr. Nizar was arrested by a group of joint forces known as the “Security Cell” which consists of Military Intelligence, Sudanese Police Forces, and Sudanese National Security, and that he was taken to the Central Police Station where he was being detained. Armed with this information, family members together with several human rights defenders and activists stormed the Central Police Station but were informed that Dr. Nazir had been transferred to a detention center in Rabak town.

Dr. Nizar works as a supervisor at the Popular Council in Kosti Town and runs several food businesses. He is also a member of the Cultural and Art Council in Kosti and a coordinator/supervisor of the IDPs (especially those living in schools within Kosti town). Dr. Nazir has been very vocal especially on social media, about the need for humanitarian aid and the role of the Sudanese authorities.

Prior to his disappearance, Dr. Nizar had received a letter from the local authorities in Kosti banning him from volunteering and supervising the IDP shelters saying that he should leave the role to the authorities even though the shelter centers were established by well-wishers (civilians) who also donate food and other basic needs to the IDPs.

Other developments

On 6 April 2024, a group of joint forces popularly known as the "Security Cell" arrested four Resistance Committee members of Albrugeg locality located in Northern Sudan. Those arrested are;

- Abdallah Abdul Monim (m)
- Ayoub Saeed (m)
- Hussein Sharif (m)
- Rawa Esam (f)

The group was arrested in front of Mr. Ayoub Saeed's home located in the Karma neighborhood in Albrugeg locality. They were allegedly arrested for gathering people for Iftar (fast-breaking evening meal) organized to celebrate and commemorate the 6 April 1985 Sudanese Revolution that ousted former president Gafaar Nimeiry.

On 5 April 2024, at around 1:00 AM. a group of seven unidentified gunmen driving a Land Cruiser vehicle abducted Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed aged 35-years-old from his house in Umdakhon locality in Central Darfur State and drove towards the eastern direction to an unknown location. Mr. Ahmed is the Danish Refugees Council Umdakhon office director. The reasons for his abduction are unknown and efforts by the Popular voluntary group in Umdakhon to find him proved futile.

However, on 11 April 2024, Mr. Ahmed was released and left on the main road in Moni in West Darfur State. A reliable source informed ACJPS that Mr. Ahmed's family refused to pay ransom to the kidnappers thus releasing him after several days. He added that his abduction happened shortly after DRC had distributed relief in Umdokhon

On 10 March 2024, RSF in Nyala, South Darfur State arrested six male traders from the Zaghawa tribe from Aljeer North neighborhood in Nyala. The traders run several businesses in the market in Nyala. They were accused of being affiliated with the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Manni Manawi (SLM/MM) and that they are recruiting civilians to join the movement. The traders are being detained at the former National Security base which was seized by RSF.

Those arrested are:

1. Mustafa Jamal (m)

2. Ahmed Hurry (m)
3. Nasir Abdul Gadir (m)
4. Nasur Eldien Shumo
5. Emam Abdulbasit (m)
6. Daw Albit Jabir (m)

On 1 April 2024, RSF in Nyala of South Darfur arrested Mr. Ahmed Alngar from the market near Elgenina bus station in Nyala. Mr. Alngar was later released on 4 April 2024 after the payment of 700,000 Sudanese Pounds that was agreed upon following several negotiations.

ACJPS therefore calls upon the Sudanese authorities to:

- Cease the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, activists, and civilians, and guarantee their right to freedom of expression as recognized under article 56 of the Constitutional Declaration of 2019 and international and regional human rights treaties that Sudan is a state party to.
- Investigate the arbitrary detention of the detainees by the warring parties. Such an investigation should be thorough and impartial with the view of finding and holding the perpetrators accountable. The authorities must instruct its security agencies to cease the harassment and intimidation of individuals exercising their rights legitimately.
- Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of the detainees and order their immediate release in the absence of valid legal charges that are consistent with international law and standards or, if such charges exist, bring them before an impartial, independent, and competent tribunal and guarantee their procedural rights at all times.