



Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre

Political assassinations of University Students from Darfur Continues in Sudan

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Political assassinations and violence against university students in Sudan has reached epidemic proportions. University campus across Sudan are no longer places of peace and intellectual and academic development rather they became killing grounds mainly for political motives. University students originating from war-torn Darfur, especially members of the United Popular Front (UPF), bear a major share of the brunt of these crimes and aggressions. The suspected culprits in most, if not all, these incidents of violence and criminality are members of the students' wing of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) referred to as the National Islamic Students' Movement and its *Jihadists Units*. Members of the *Jihadists Units* receive special military and security training and they are armed with all kinds of light weapons to be used against dissident students. They work in complicity with the security forces thus enjoying full immunity against investigation, prosecution and accountability.

In August 2017, at least 4 university students from Darfur were killed and more than two dozen were injured some of them are in critical health conditions that threaten their lives with death or maiming for life. On 31 August 2017, a group of pro-government university students stabbed to death two students from Darfur (late Jaffar Mohamed Abdulbari aka Guevara and the late Ashraf Al-Hadi Burma) both of them are third-year graders at Al-Neelain University, Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Economics respectively. A third victim, Mr. Mohamed Ali Abdalla aka Kaloul, has been declared clinically dead on 1st September 2017. Following this attack, which took place at a boarding house run by Omdurman Islamic University, the police and security forces stormed the university dormitory in large numbers and used excessive force and firearms to evacuate the premises. Students from Darfur, who have no alternative accommodation, were forced to go onto the streets leaving their belongings behind. More than 25 students were injured during this attack and most of them lost their belongings and valuables reportedly stolen by the security forces. On 24 August 2017, the security forces shot dead Mr. Abdelwahab Hassan A. Adam in Nertiti Locality (Central Darfur State). He was a fourth-year student at the Faculty of Economics at Zalengi University and a member of the UPF.

The Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre (DRDC) is deeply concerned about the aggressive intrusion by political forces in universities and high education institutions and their efforts to recruit university students into their ranks through different tactics. The supervision over dormitories, housing and other services provided to the students through the government-controlled National Students' Support Fund puts many students, especially those perceived as supporters of the pro-democracy opposition and the insurgent groups, into great disadvantage. Control of the students' unions and associations by pro-government militant elements through what other students consider as corrupt means and the bias of university administrations towards NCP members has highly polarized the students. Accordingly, the behaviour and actions of the students have become largely politicized and driven by the general atmosphere of intolerance, violence and armed conflict in Darfur.

DRDC notes that students from Darfur have been facing systematic violations of their human rights and multiple forms of harassment and oppression. In addition to extra-judicial killings and political assassinations, they are the prime victims of illegal arrests and detention, torture and ill-treatment, dismissal from universities and deportation from boarding houses, deprivation of their rights to exemption from tuition fees, ethnic-profiling, discrimination against and unfair trials to mention a few examples. DRDC is concerned about the safety and well-being of students held in government custody, where torture and ill-treatment of detainees are the norms. Of special concern is the fate of students awaiting trial for allegedly committing capital crimes. At present, there are 9 university students from Darfur charged under article 130 of Sudan's Penal Code, under which a conviction carries the death penalty. They are held in security facilities for allegedly killing two policemen during the protest in Bakht Alruda University in May 2017. On 29 August 2017, the Criminal Court (Khartoum North) found Mr. Asim Omer Hassan guilty of murder in a questionable judicial process that generated an outcry in Khartoum. Mr. Hassan is a university student originating from Darfur and is expected to be sentenced to death in a month time. On 28 June 2016, Mr. Mohamed Bagari Hasaballa, a student at East Nile University (Khartoum North) and who hails from the Utash Camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Darfur State, had been sentenced to death by the Criminal Court (Khartoum North) in a questionable retrial. In these two precedents, the judicial process that led to the conviction of these students has been marred with irregularities and violations even of Sudan's own regulations, including the Evidence Act of 1991 as well as the Criminal Procedures Act of 1991. The process blatantly violated universal human rights standards and customary law where confessions extracted under duress were used as evidence to convict the defendants for crimes that carry the death penalty.

Its DRD's belief that the treatment meted out to students from Darfur, especially their frequent expulsion from boarding houses and dormitories run by universities and the National Students' Support Fund is inhumane and immoral. The families of some of these students live in miserable IDP settlements yet they managed, against all odds, to succeed in their studies and reach university levels. Because of the difficult conditions in their region, these students need to be supported financially and psychologically rather than being further victimized, discriminated against and oppressed.

Once again DRDC calls on the Government of Sudan to:

1. End all sorts of violence, harassment, discrimination and ethnically-motivated targeting of university students from Darfur based on their regional origin and conduct public investigation of the reasons that provoked their selective killings and assassinations in recent years.
2. Undertake immediate measures to end violence in university campus, particularly by dismantling the *Jihadist Units* run by NCP students in universities and put an end to all sorts of ill-treatment and killings of students perceived as supporters of the opposition political forces.
3. Reform the National Students' Support Fund and return the supervision of students' housing and related services provided to the students to the students' deanships in different universities.
4. Implement a special affirmative action plan to the benefit of students from Darfur as most of them come from poor families that have been traumatized and economically devastated by the long-running armed conflict in their region.
5. Embark on judicial reform to bring its laws in conformity with international human rights standards. Judicial reform in Sudan should abolish all provisions in the 2010 National Security Act (2010 NSA), which grant the security agents extensive powers and immunity to arrest and detain individuals and to search and seize without judicial oversight as well as provisions that ordain the use of torture to extract confessions, particularly Article 10(I) of Sudan's Evidence Act of 1993, which authorizes courts of law to admit evidence extracted through improper procedures as a basis for conviction, including on crimes that carry capital punishment...Ends...