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### **Sudan: Judicial harassment against Sudanese women human rights defenders.**

On 10 January 2021, Women Human rights defender **Waad Bahjat** is due to attend her second hearing session before the Criminal Court of Khartoum. She is facing four charges which include 'defamation', 'insulting a public servant', 'publishing false news', and 'public annoyance'.

[Waad Bahjat](#) is a Sudanese woman human rights defender and engineer. She is a member of Umbda Resistance Committee, which frequently organises peaceful demonstrations calling to promote civil and economic rights in Sudan. The Committee also works to fight corruption in public organisations in Sudan. Waad Bahjat is also a blogger and publishes posts that aim to promote Sudanese women's rights.

On 9 November 2020, Waad Bahjat was arrested by a policeman while she was in her car outside a petrol station in Khartoum broadcasting a Facebook live video documenting an incident in which several women were reportedly harassed by policemen and military men. The woman human rights defender asked the policeman for his badge which he refused to present. As a result Waad Bahjat refused to go with him. Despite her resistance, the woman human rights defender was taken to Al-Imtedad Police station, where she was reportedly subjected to ill-treatment, assault and several physical abuses during which she injured her shoulder. Waad Bahjat was detained for one day. On 10 November 2020, the woman human rights defender was released after one of her family members personally guaranteed her behaviour. The Public Prosecutor filed four cases against her, including 'defamation', 'insulting a public servant', 'publishing false news', and 'public annoyance'. According to the Sudanese Criminal Code, Waad Bahjat can be sentenced to one to six months imprisonment or fined a sum determined by the judge. On 3 December 2020, the first hearing session was held and the Public Prosecutor submitted the charges and their witnesses in front of the court. The next hearing session is scheduled to be held on 10 January 2021.

Sudanese women human rights defenders are being frequently harassed by the authorities. On 16 December 2020, woman human rights defender and journalist **Sulafa Alsidig Alhaj** received an order to attend an investigation, as two cases were filed against her by the Press Attorney general, regarding two interviews she conducted with the Sudanese journalist and writer Abed Elrehman Al Amin, who spoke about corruption among leaders from the previous Sudanese regime. [Sulafa Alsidig Alhaj](#) is facing the charge of "defamation", and could be sentenced up to six months imprisonment and a fine determined by the judge. Her hearing session has not been scheduled yet.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the judicial harassment against the women human rights defenders Waad Bahjat and Sulafa Alsidig Alhaj. Front Line Defenders believes the two women human rights defenders are being targeted solely as result of their peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

### **Front Line Defenders urge the Sudanese authorities to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against Wad Bahjat and Sulafa Alsidig Alhaj as it is believed that they are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the physical abuse against woman human defender Wad Bahjat, with a view to publishing the results and

bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Sudan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.