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Sudan: Killing of four human rights defenders in Darfur

Over the past two and a half weeks, four human rights defenders **Mohammed Ahmed Kudia**, **Khamis Arabab**, **Abdelkhalig Matar** and **Khidir Sulieman Abdelmageed** were killed in El Geneina, West Darfur.

On 28 May 2023, the human rights defender and lawyer Mohammed Ahmed Kudia was killed, his house burned down and property looted by members of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group.

On 30 May 2023, the human rights defender, lawyer and member of the Darfur Bar Association, Khamis Arabab, was killed when his house in El Geneina was attacked by members of the RSF. For the past two years, he worked to defend victims of attacks on camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in El Geneina. He also provided legal aid to victims of human rights violations in Darfur.

On 5 June 2023, the human rights defender and lawyer Abdelkhalig Matar was killed alongside eight of his family members who were burned in their house in El Geneina.

On 11 June 2023, the human rights defender and head of the human rights organisation Afkar, Khidir Sulieman Abdelmageed, was attacked and killed on the road in El Geneina while trying to leave his house after receiving death threats. The human rights defender worked with several national and international human rights organisations who monitored human rights violations in Sudan. Recently, he had worked with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) in Darfur.

According to an announcement from the Darfur Bar Association in May 2023, the human rights defenders and lawyers Mohammed Ahmed Kudia, Khamis Arabab, Abdelkhalig Matar had also received death threats from militia members while working on cases related to attacks on IDP camps in El Geneina prior to their killings.

As a consequence of the armed conflict that broke out in Khartoum, Sudan on 15 April 2023 and the spread of militant groups in Darfur, human rights defenders and activists are in severe danger as a result of their work.

Front Line Defenders condemns the murder of human rights defenders Mohammed Ahmed Kudia, Khamis Arabab, Abdelkhalig Matar and Khidir Sulieman Abdelmageed as it believes they were killed as a result of having witnessed the outbreak of a violent clash between the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group and Sudanese military forces while they were carrying out their human rights work in West Darfur. Front Line Defenders is concerned about the escalation of violence in West Darfur, and the dangerous context in which human rights defenders and civilians find themselves.

Front Line Defenders urge the authorities to in Sudan to:

1. Immediately carry out an impartial and independent investigation into the killings of human rights defenders Mohammed Ahmed Kudia, Khamis Arabab, Abdelkhalig Matar and Khidir Sulieman Abdelmageed;
2. Fully implement the Jeddah agreement signed by the warring parties to ensure the protection of civilians during the conflict in Sudan;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Sudan are protected and able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.