

## Statement on the Arrest and Enforced Disappearance of Sudanese Lawyer Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq

The 10 undersigned organisations express deep concern over the enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention of Sudanese lawyer **Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq** since 22 December 2024. His case inserts itself within an alarming pattern of persecution against legal professionals in Sudan, who continue to face arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and judicial harassment for carrying out their professional duties.

Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq is a 61-year-old lawyer who has dedicated his professional career to defending human rights defenders, activists, and marginalised communities in Sudan. For decades, Mr. Al-Sadiq has worked on cases involving wrongfully detained political prisoners, victims of human rights abuses, and individuals persecuted under repressive laws. Mr. Al-Sadiq had previously represented pro-democracy activists, journalists, and civilians facing unjust military trials, particularly in the aftermath of the 2018-2019 revolution. Due to his legal advocacy, Mr. Al-Sadiq had been a target of harassment and intimidation for several years, receiving threats from security forces and facing restrictions on his professional work. Despite these risks, he remained committed to providing legal services to marginalised communities and those most in need of legal aid, especially amid the deteriorating situation in Sudan. He has been widely recognised within the Sudanese community for his commitment to justice and, up until his disappearance, remained one of the few remaining practicing lawyers in his region following the beginning of the conflict in 2023.

On 22 December 2024, members of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) abducted Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq in front of his home in Khartoum. According to witnesses, he was taken by military vehicle in the presence of at least seven individuals, without any legal basis or warrant being presented for his arrest. According to shared information, shortly after his abduction, RSF forces raided his home and confiscated his belongings, including his computer and legal case files, strengthening beliefs that this abduction was directly linked to his work as a lawyer.

Since his arrest, Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq has been held incommunicado, with no access to his family or legal representation. To date, no information has been made available about his whereabouts, raising serious concerns regarding his safety and respect for his human rights, as previous reports of incommunicado detentions have been coupled with testimonies of violence and gross inhumane treatment. Furthermore, due to pre-existing health conditions, including scleroderma and impaired vision, his situation is particularly critical.

The abduction of Mr. Al-Sadiq is not an isolated case but reflects a systematic crackdown on lawyers in Sudan. Reports indicate that since 2023, more than 500 law offices in Sudan have been raided and looted by the RSF, and numerous lawyers, especially those working on human rights cases, have faced arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and even extrajudicial executions, violating both human rights law and Article 48 of the Sudanese Lawyers Act. In particular, lawyers who played a role in the 2018–2019 revolution have been deliberately targeted and attacked for their legal work and advocacy for human rights.

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers<sup>1</sup> emphasise that legal professionals must be able to perform their duties without intimidation, harassment, or undue interference. Under Principle 16, lawyers must be protected from any form of retaliation for their work. The continued use of arbitrary incommunicado detention to target lawyers, depriving them of a fair trial and access to a lawyer, contravenes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),<sup>2</sup> specifically articles 9 (protection from arbitrary detention), 14 (right to a fair trial), and 19 (freedom of expression).

Additionally, Sudan is a signatory to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,<sup>3</sup> which guarantees the right to liberty and security of the person (Article 6) and to a fair trial (Article 7). The enforced disappearance of Mr. Al-Sadiq, coupled with the denial of his due process rights, represents a grave violation of these protections. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners<sup>4</sup> (Nelson Mandela Rules) further affirm that detainees must have access to their families, legal counsel, and necessary medical treatment—rights that continue to be denied to Mr. Al-Sadiq.

Finally, the reported systemic inhumane treatment and the use of torture and ill-treatment against lawyers when in incommunicado detention are in stark contradiction with protections guaranteed under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,<sup>5</sup> of which Sudan is a signatory as well.

Beyond the personal impact on Mr. Al-Sadiq, this case exemplifies the broader systemic repression of legal professionals in Sudan, with numerous lawyers, such as, Noor Gabriel Idris Abdullah, Montaser Abdullah, and Idzihar Jumaa Saeed, facing arbitrary arrests, incommunicado, unlawful detentions, and torture, which constitute grave human rights violations. Lawyers, as fundamental actors in the justice system, must be protected as their ability to work independently and safely is vital for upholding justice, defending the rights of individuals, and ensuring fair trial guarantees.

The persecution of lawyers in Sudan represents a direct assault on the rule of law and the fundamental right to legal representation. The targeting of legal professionals, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, inhumane treatment, and the use of military courts, undermines access to justice and further deteriorates the human rights situation, specifically for lawyers.

### **Recommendations:**

The undersigned organisations are gravely concerned about the severe reported violations of lawyer Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq's human rights and the wider persecution of legal professionals in Sudan. Lawyers for Lawyers and the undersigned organisations call for:

1. The immediate and unconditional release of lawyer Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq and all other arbitrarily detained lawyers in Sudan;
2. An immediate disclosure of his whereabouts and guarantees of his safety, access to medical care, and protection from ill-treatment;

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations. (1990). *Basic principles on the role of lawyers*. Adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, 27 August–7 September 1990. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-role-lawyers#:~:text=Governments%20shall%20ensure%20that%20lawyers,not%20suffer%2C%20or%20be%20threatened>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Treaty Series, 999, 171. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

<sup>3</sup> Organization of African Unity. (1981). *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*. <https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=49>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations General Assembly. (2015). *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)* (A/RES/70/175). <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/175>.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. (1984). *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. Treaty Series, 1465, 85. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>.

3. An end to incommunicado detention and the arbitrary prosecution of lawyers under military courts and emergency laws in Sudan;
4. Accountability for those responsible for enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and attacks against lawyers, ensuring independent and transparent investigations into human rights violations;
5. The immediate cessation of all forms of surveillance, intimidation, or harassment of lawyers, ensuring the protection of their right to independently perform their professional duties without fear.

We stand in solidarity with lawyer Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq and all legal professionals in Sudan facing repression for their work. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

On behalf of,

Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L)

Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW)

International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (IOAD)

Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC)

Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL)

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)

Frontline Lawyers Association (FLA)

Human Rights Institute of the Bar of Brussels (HRIBB)

Geneva Bar Association (ODAGE)