

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Ref.: AL SDN 2/2026
(Please use this reference in your reply)

26 March 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 53/12, 60/8, 54/14, 52/4, 52/7 and 59/20.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the abduction, disappearance, severe beating and allegations of torture with serious risk to the life of lawyer and human rights defender Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said; as well as her arrest, arbitrary detention, and prosecution on unfounded charges under the Sudanese Criminal Act.**

Ms. **Izdihar Gumaa Said** is a senior Sudanese lawyer and human rights defender. Her practice encompasses providing legal assistance to civilian victims of human rights violations by parties to the ongoing conflict in the country, including efforts to secure the release of those detained. For many years, she has consistently upheld the principle of presumption of innocence and has represented victims without discrimination.

Concerns regarding the arrest and alleged arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and lawyers in Sudan have been raised in several previous communications sent to your Excellency's Government by special procedures mandate holders, including SDN 6/2025; SDN 4/2025; SDN 2/2025; SDN 1/2025; SDN 4/2024; SDN 1/2023; SDN 3/2022; SDN 2/2022; and SDN 4/2021. We thank your Excellency's Government for its reply to SDN 2/2022 and 4/2025. We regret that no response has been received from your Excellency's Government to the remainder of the cited communications.

According to the information received:

On 24 October 2024, Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said was abducted by armed members of the government security forces near Karima, northern Sudan and taken to an unknown location. No arrest warrant or legal order was presented by the security forces. Ms. Gumma was reportedly abandoned in a bush, in a remote deserted area near Jebel Barkal by her abductors and was subsequently discovered a few hours later (within half a day) by passing mineworkers. She was brutally beaten

during her abduction before she was abandoned, which put her life in serious danger. The assault caused multiple fractures requiring urgent surgery.

On 31 October 2024, the Military Intelligence Division of the 19th Brigade in Merowe city filed a complaint, accusing her of espionage and collaboration with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a main party to the conflict under articles 26, 50 and 51 of the Sudanese Criminal Act.

On 2 November 2025, she was formally arrested after her immunity was lifted through an allegedly illegitimate lawyers' syndicate. She was detained and released on bail the same day. Her lawyer in Port Sudan is trying to legally challenge the lawyers' syndicate decision. Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said has also initiated a legal process by filing a complaint with the Constitutional Court to challenge the Prosecutor's decision to lift her legal immunity.

The information suggests that the intimidation directed at her is intended to deter her from representing individuals detained in the current conflict. She has restarted her work as a lawyer since December 2025, after recovering from her injuries.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information received, we wish to express our concerns at the alleged abduction, enforced disappearance even for a short duration, severe beating and allegations of torture which have meant a serious risk to the life of lawyer and human rights defender Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said; as well as her arrest, arbitrary detention, and prosecution on unfounded charges of espionage and collaboration with the Rapid Support Forces under articles 26, 50 and 51 of the Sudanese Criminal Act. We express our serious concern for her life and safety and remain very concerned that these acts may have occurred in retaliation for her work as lawyer and human rights defender.

If confirmed, the facts alleged would appear to contravene, among other norms, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Sudan acceded to on 3 August 1990, in particular articles 6, 7, 9, 14, 16 and 19 read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3), on the right not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, also established, at least, in article 1, 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified by Sudan in 2021; right to liberty and security, right to prompt access to an impartial and independent judicial authority as well as to be informed of the charges brought against the detainee.

We stress that the prohibition of torture is absolute and that, attached to it, are obligations to criminalize and investigate all acts of torture and/or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to prosecute suspects, to punish those responsible and to provide remedies to victims (A/HRC/52/30). Victims are to be protected from reprisals or intimidation during said investigations, and they have an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible.¹

¹ For a full explanation on the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the related States' obligations to criminalize, investigate and prosecute crimes of torture and other ill-treatment, see Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or

We also wish to recall the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance which Sudan acceded to on 10 August 2021, in particular articles 2 and 17.

Moreover, the alleged facts would constitute a violation of Sudan's obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders; as well as the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, in particular article 16, which provides that governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, harassment or improper interference, and that lawyers shall not suffer prosecution for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

We are particularly alarmed by the ongoing criminal case against Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said, based on allegedly unfounded charges under art. 20, 50 and 51 of the Sudanese Criminal Act. We call on your Excellency's Government to ensure a prompt review of Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said's case by fair and impartial criminal authorities and courts, in line with international human rights law and standards, and to ensure her prompt dismissal of the charges if these are proven to be unsubstantiated.

We wish to recall the legal profession and its free exercise are an essential element of the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the functioning of an independent judicial system. The free exercise of the legal profession contributes to ensuring access to justice, oversight of state power, and the protection of due process and judicial guarantees. According to international standards, States must put in place all appropriate measures to ensure that lawyers are not subject to, or threatened with, prosecution or any administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics. International and regional standards also expressly prohibit the identification of lawyers with their clients or their clients' causes in the discharge of their professional duties.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.

punishment ([A/77/502](#)); and Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Good practices in national criminalization, investigation, prosecution and sentencing for offences of torture ([A/HRC/52/30](#)).

2. Please provide information on the measure taken to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of the abduction, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and severe beating of Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said, in line with Sudan's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
3. Please provide information on the measures taken to protect the life and integrity of Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said and all lawyers and human rights defenders in this context.
4. Please provide information on the legal basis for the ongoing trial of Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said. Please explain how the charges brought against Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said are consistent with Sudan's obligations under international human rights law.
5. Please provide information on the reported lifting of Ms. Izdihar Gumaa Said's immunity.
6. Please indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that Ms. Izdihar Gumaa and other lawyers, are able to carry out their legitimate work, in a safe and enabling environment without fear of threats or acts of intimidation and harassment of any kind.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to avoid any irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of Mr. Izdihar Gumma Said, to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Further, we would like to inform your Excellency's Government that after having transmitted the information contained in the present communication to the Government, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit the case through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether the deprivation of liberty was arbitrary or not. The present communication in no way prejudices any opinion the Working Group may render. The Government is required to respond separately to the letter of allegation and the regular procedure.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should

be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Margaret Satterthwaite
Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Matthew Gillett
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Gabriella Citroni
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Alice Jill Edwards
Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Reem Alsalem
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

We would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the applicable international standards and norms, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Sudan on 18 March 1986.

We would like to remind your Excellency's Government of the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as codified in article 7 of the ICCPR and articles 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), to which Sudan acceded in 2021. Article 1 of the CAT prohibits "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity".

With regards to enforced disappearance, we wish to reiterate that duration is not a constitutive element under international human rights law, therefore regardless of the duration of an enforced disappearance, it produces serious harm and consequences for the disappeared and their families, and also presents practical challenges as regards seeking protection as well as defence of their rights, see the joint statement of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on so-called "short-term" enforced disappearances (CED/C/11). We are further drawing your Excellency's Government's attention to the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of enforced disappearances which has attained the status of jus cogens. If the alleged enforced disappearance is confirmed, it would amount to a violation of articles 1, 2 and 17 of International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and articles 1, 7, and 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. We also make reference to the Working Group's study on Enforced disappearance and economic, social and cultural rights (A/HRC/30/38/Add.5), in particular paragraph 33-37 which highlights the chilling effect of the disappearance of human rights defenders. As well, the Working Group's General Comment on women affected by enforced disappearances (A/HRC/WGEID/98/2) highlights that gender perspective is crucial in explaining, understanding and dealing with unique disadvantages and obstacles that women face in the exercise of their human rights.

Article 9 of the ICCPR provides that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law. Furthermore, article 9(2) provides that any person arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly notified of the charge against him. Furthermore, under article 9(4), any person deprived of his or her liberty must have the right to an effective remedy to enable him or her to challenge his or her arrest or detention judicially, which must be capable of securing the

person's release if it is decided in his or her favour. A decision to hold someone in any form of detention is arbitrary if its justification is not regularly reassessed (Human Rights Committee general comment No. 35, paragraph 12).

We would like to draw attention to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of prisoners, or the Nelson Mandela Rules, in particular rule 3 on incommunicado detention which states that “Imprisonment and other measures that result in cutting off persons from the outside world are afflictive by the very fact of taking from these persons the right of self-determination by depriving them of their liberty. Therefore, the prison system shall not, except as incidental to justifiable separation or the maintenance of discipline, aggravate the suffering inherent in such a situation.” Rule 1 states that no prisoner shall be subjected to torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment, and rule 24 states that the provision of health care for prisoners is a State responsibility.

Article 14 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to a fair trial and equality before the courts. It states that everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal established by law. Under article 14(3), in the determination of any criminal charge against him, everyone shall be entitled to the following minimum guarantees, in full equality: (a) To be informed promptly and in detail in a language which he understands of the nature and cause of the charge against him; (b) To have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing; (c) To be tried without undue delay.

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media”. This right applies online as well as offline and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend. In its [general comment No. 34](#), the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including “political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse” (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11).

The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that “all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress” (para. 23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be

necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, and restrictions must always be “the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function” ([CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34](#)).

We would also like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the fundamental norms set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Right and responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Declaration on Human Rights Defenders). In particular, we would like to refer to articles 1 and 2 which declare that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has the primary responsibility and duty to protect, promote and fulfil all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, article 12, paragraphs 2 and 3, provides that the State shall ensure the protection of everyone from violence, threats, retaliation, discrimination, denial in law or in fact, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration.

We recall to your Excellency's Government the UN Guiding Principles on the Role of Lawyers, which establish international standards aimed at safeguarding the independence of the legal profession as a cornerstone of the rule of law and access to justice. Article 16 requires that governments ensure that lawyers can carry out all their professional functions without intimidation, harassment, hindrance, or improper interference. It further guarantees lawyers' freedom of movement and their ability to communicate and consult with clients freely, both domestically and internationally. Article 16 protects lawyers from prosecution or administrative, economic, or other sanctions for actions taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, ethical standards, and legal obligations. Together, these guarantees are essential to ensure effective legal representation, particularly in sensitive or politically charged cases, and to prevent the use of legal or administrative measures as tools of retaliation against lawyers for the legitimate exercise of their profession.

We also would like to recall to your Excellency's Government the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which was proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993. In particular, we would like to refer to article 1 that states that “ ‘violence against women’ means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” We also would like to refer to article 4 (b) and (c) according to which States should “refrain from engaging in violence against women; and “exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons.”

Finally, we also would like to recall to your Excellency's Government the General Assembly resolution 68/181 of 18 December 2013, in which it called on States to, inter alia, protect women human rights defenders, respect and support their activities, condemn and prevent human rights violations and abuses as well as violence and discrimination against them, create a safe and enabling environment for the defence of

human rights with a gender perspective, ensure that they can engage in peaceful protests, ensure that the promotion and protection of human rights are not criminalized and refrain from any act of intimidation or reprisal against them or their family members and associates for their cooperation with international institutions.