



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 42nd regular session

Item 10: Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the Sudan

Oral statement

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Mr. President, Mr. Independent Expert,

This interactive dialogue comes at a critical juncture for Sudan. Last year, this Council adopted a resolution that did not reflect the situation on the ground, systemic human rights issues, and reforms needed to advance the rights of all Sudanese, both in the centre and in the peripheries, including conflict-affected areas. Developments since December 2018 demonstrated that Sudan's human rights challenges, including widespread impunity for violations and abuses, had not been addressed, and that approaching Sudan from a purely "technical assistance" angle was a mistake.

As a new chapter is opening in Sudan, the Council has the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to domestic human rights progress. A number of elements of a new relationship between Sudan and the UN human rights system were outlined in an [opinion piece](#) DefendDefenders published in May 2019.

The Council and other UN human rights bodies and mechanisms should unambiguously support systemic human rights reform in the country. "Systemic reform" includes efforts to bring the legislative framework in line with international standards and to reform various policies and practices. It also means conducting a thorough investigation into past and ongoing violations, holding perpetrators to account, and bringing decades of impunity to an end.

This Council should increase, not decrease, its level of scrutiny and engagement with the Sudanese authorities, which are showing a new political will.

OHCHR also has a decisive role to play. An MoU should urgently be signed between the Sudanese Government and the Office, providing for a fully-mandated country office with access to all areas and persons of interest and ability to conduct investigative, monitoring and public reporting work, in addition to providing advisory and capacity-building services to the Government and civil society.

An OHCHR country office and ongoing consideration by the Council are not mutually exclusive. They are rather mutually reinforcing, as Council action provides political back-up to expert work, while OHCHR work places expertise at the centre of political interventions. This Council has failed the Sudanese people for too long. It should now do everything in its power to help it.

Thank you.