



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 43rd regular session

Item 4: General Debate

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Madam President,

In October 2019, DefendDefenders conducted a mission to Sudan. We met with human rights defenders, lawyers, civil society organisations, and government officials; assessed the human rights situation, challenges and needs of human rights organisations; and identified opportunities for collaboration and work. Last week, we launched Sudan as our “focus country” for 2020 as well as our Sudan programme, which aims to support defenders.

Since December 2018, Sudan has witnessed significant political developments that have the potential to bring about lasting human rights progress. We salute and applaud Sudan’s Revolution, in particular the role played by women and youth, and the overwhelming sense of pride that the Sudanese people have reclaimed their space and their rights.

We warmly welcome Sudan’s intention to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and to reform laws that are inconsistent with human rights obligations, including national security legislation, as well as the policy of “full cooperation” with the UN announced by the transitional government.

There will be no lasting peace, democracy, and development without a central place for human rights, justice, the rule of law, inclusiveness, government accountability at all levels, provision of basic services to the population, and acknowledgment of the identity and equal dignity of all Sudanese. Systemic human rights issues, including impunity for violations and abuses committed both in the centre and in the peripheries, need to be addressed.

As a new chapter is opening in Sudan, the Human Rights Council has the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to domestic progress. While extending technical advice and capacity-building to the government, including on legal reform and on how to create and maintain a safe and enabling civic space, it should continue to monitor and hold public debates on human rights developments in Sudan.

Thank you for your attention.