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Urgent Statement

Arab Coalition for Sudan and the Arab Network for Media Crisis call for a broad front to defend freedom and protect journalists

Arab Coalition for Sudan (ACS) and the Arab Network for Media Crisis (ANMC) condemn the brutal assault against Osman Mirghani, the editor-in-chief of Atayyar newspaper. The attack was carried out by an armed group driving two four wheel drive cars that stormed the newspaper headquarters and attacked him till he lost his consciousness. Mr. Mirghani was transferred to the hospital later.

ACS and ANMC express their deep concern over the emergence of an extremist group called "Hamza Group to fight heresy and atheism" who claims the responsibility of the "terrorist" attack on Mr. Mirghani. This group has practiced violence and oppression against Atayyar journalists, looted their laptops and cell phones. It is a pity that such an incident takes place in the heart of Khartoum, only a few meters away from the presidential palace and the headquarters of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS).

This flagrant assault against Atayyar editor-in-chief is a dangerous development and indicator that rings the bells where genuine danger encircles journalists; it is not the first of its kind, it was preceded by the assassination of Mohammed Taha Mohammed Ahmed, the editor-in-chief of Al-wefaq newspaper. These practices are in order to spread the culture of violence and extremism, to reject the other opinions and to silence other voices.

The freedom of opinion and expression was subject to serious violations in Sudan, and newspapers are suffering from different types of harassment, as censorship, confiscation, forced closure, halting of opinion writers, repeated summonses, arbitrary arrests, prosecuting journalists in publishing issues, and this has reached direct assault against journalists.

ACS and ANMC call on the Sudanese authorities for the formation of an independent investigation committee to bring the perpetrators before justice. The official statements of denunciation and condemnation are not enough; they should be followed by actions, as well as the state's reiteration not to protect such extremist groups.

ACS calls on all civil society organizations and employees in media to put an end to the culture of violence and terrorism, to form a broad front to protect journalists and to defend public freedoms and freedom of opinion and expression.

ACS

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