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On World Press Freedom Day: Sounding the alarm over horrific violations against journalists and the absence of media freedoms in Sudan

Press Statement - May 3, 2026

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The world celebrates World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, a day on which we uphold the value of free speech and independent journalism as fundamental pillars of democracy and human rights. In this context, the Sudan Media Forum stands to renew its commitment to defending press freedom, but it also observes with deep sorrow and grave concern the bitter reality experienced by journalists and media professionals in Sudan, especially since the outbreak of war on April 15, 2023.

The theme of this year's 2026 celebration, titled "Painting a Peaceful Future", emphasises the role of free and independent media as an effective tool in promoting a culture of dialogue and building bridges of understanding between peoples, and not just a transmitter of news. On this day, we congratulate the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate, a member of the Sudan Media Forum, for receiving the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize in recognition of its prominent role in condemning the deliberate targeting of journalists in the context of the ongoing war in the country. In this context, the Sudan Media Forum renews its commitment to defending press freedom, and at the same time considers with great sorrow and concern the bitter reality that journalists and media professionals in Sudan are living in, especially since the outbreak of the war on April 15, 2023.

The media landscape in Sudan has transformed into an arena of grave dangers, where journalists and media workers face existential threats and systematic violence from the parties to the conflict. The Sudan Media Forum, alongside other human rights and media organisations, has documented a horrific series of violations against journalists, including:

- **Killing and Direct Targeting:** We have lost dear journalist colleagues who perished while performing their professional duties or due to the conflict, whether through direct targeting or as victims of indiscriminate violence. This constitutes a war crime and a flagrant violation of International Humanitarian Law, which provides special protection for journalists in conflict zones.
- **Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearance:** Many journalists have been subjected to arbitrary detention by the warring parties, held in inhumane conditions, and some have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment. The fate of others remains unknown after being subjected to enforced disappearance.
- **Threats and Intimidation:** Journalists attempting to cover events objectively face constant threats of death, arrest, or harm to themselves and their families, forcing many to stop working or practice harsh self-censorship.

- **Displacement and Homelessness:** The war has led to the displacement of large numbers of journalists, both internally and externally. They have lost their homes and livelihoods, and media institutions have been scattered, weakening their ability to continue their work.

These direct violations are coupled with a near-total absence of press freedom and freedom of expression in large parts of Sudan. Severe restrictions have been imposed on media coverage, information has been deliberately withheld, the headquarters of many media institutions have been closed or destroyed, and a climate of fear and repression has prevailed, preventing the press from fulfilling its role in reporting the truth, exposing violations, and informing the public.

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As a result of this deteriorating and hostile climate for press freedom, the World Press Freedom Index ranked Sudan 161st (out of 180 countries), dropping seven places from last year's index.

Targeting journalists and silencing the media is not merely an attack on individuals or a profession; it is an assault on the entire Sudanese society's right to knowledge and truth, undermining any hope for achieving peace, justice, and accountability.

Therefore, the Sudan Media Forum, on World Press Freedom Day:

- **Strongly condemns** all violations perpetrated against journalists and media professionals in Sudan, including killing, detention, threats, and intimidation. At least 34 journalists have been killed, many while performing their duties. More than 680 violations have been observed and registered including killings, displacement and detention, enforced disappearances, physical assaults, threats, stalking and confiscation of equipment, and direct targeting of media organisations. Journalists continue to be detained during their work, while crossing checkpoints manned by combatants, or taken from their homes. This situation has caused the displacement of at least 1,000 journalists to safer areas within the country, while more than 500 have fled across borders seeking asylum.
- **Demands** that the parties to the conflict immediately cease all forms of targeting against journalists and media workers, and guarantee their safety and protection in accordance with International Humanitarian Law.
- **Calls for** the immediate and unconditional release of all arbitrarily detained journalists and the disclosure of the fate of those forcibly disappeared.
- **Urges** the international community, including the United Nations, the African Union, and international human rights organisations, to intensify pressure on the parties to the conflict to stop the violations, and to conduct independent investigations to hold accountable those responsible for crimes committed against journalists, noting that no investigations into the killing of any journalists have been conducted to date.

- **Affirms** the vital role of free and independent journalism in uncovering facts, documenting violations, promoting dialogue, and building peace and reconciliation in Sudan.
- **Expresses** its full solidarity with all fellow Sudanese journalists who bravely continue their work under these extremely dangerous conditions, whether inside or outside Sudan.

The Sudan Media Forum will continue to monitor violations and relentlessly defend press freedom and the rights of journalists, believing that there is no future for Sudan without a free and responsible media.

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The Sudan Media Forum

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