

Advocacy dossier

Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa

بهجة عبد العال عبد العال

Killed **Sudan**

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01

The case at a glance

Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa was a 26-year-old economist and women's rights defender in Darfur who supported survivors of sexual violence. She was shot and killed by an unidentified gunman at a funeral in Kalma camp, Nyala, on 26 October 2023.

Status	Country
Killed	**Sudan**

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Order a full, independent, and impartial investigation into the killing of Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa, with timely public reporting on findings.

02 Identify and prosecute those responsible, both the direct perpetrators and any state officials who ordered, enabled, or covered up the killing.

03 Provide effective reparation to the family of Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa.

04 Take immediate steps to protect other defenders working in the same field from similar attacks.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Threats and intimidation UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12

03

How the case unfolded

2020

Defender activity

Graduated in economics

Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa graduated from Khartoum University with a degree in economics and returned to Nyala to begin her human rights work.

15 April 2023

Context

Armed conflict erupts in Sudan

Armed conflict broke out in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, quickly spreading to Darfur and escalating threats against human rights defenders.

May 2023

Threats and intimidation

Received death threats

Bahjaa began receiving death threats related to her human rights work but refused to relocate from Nyala because she was caring for her mother.

26 October 2023

Killing

Shot dead by a gunman at a funeral

An unidentified gunman shot and killed Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa while she was attending a relative's funeral in Kalma camp for internally displaced persons in Nyala, South Darfur.

31 October 2023

Call by others

Front Line Defenders calls for an independent investigation

Front Line Defenders condemned her killing, said it believed she was killed because of her peaceful human rights work, and urged the authorities to carry out an impartial and independent investigation.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again. No investigation into the killing of Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa on 26 October 2023 has been reported, and no one has been held to account. Front Line Defenders set her death alongside the killings of Abd Elrazeg Adam Mohammed, Tareg Hassan Yagoub Elmalik, El Sadeg Mohammed Ahmed Haroun, Khamis Arabab, Khidir Sulieman Abdelmageed and lawyer Ahmed Mohamed Abdella in Darfur in 2023.

Background and Work

Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa was born and raised in South Darfur. She studied economics at Khartoum University, graduating in 2020 at the age of twenty-three. After completing her degree, she returned to Nyala and became active in human rights work focused on women's rights and survivors of gender-based violence.

She joined the Women Revolutionary group, an organization established in 2018 that advocates for women's rights, gender equality, and social justice in Darfur. The group provides direct support to survivors of rape and sexual violence, offering both psychosocial assistance and advocacy in a region where such violence has been used systematically against civilian populations. Bahjaa was also a member of the Darfur Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders, a network that coordinates protection and advocacy efforts across the region.

Her work placed her at the intersection of humanitarian response and human rights documentation during a period of escalating violence in Darfur. She was known among her colleagues for her commitment to staying close to the communities she served, even as security conditions worsened.

Threats and Context

On 15 April 2023, armed conflict erupted in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. The fighting quickly spread to Darfur, where paramilitary groups seized territory and targeted civilian populations. Human rights defenders documenting abuses became particular targets.

By May 2023, Bahjaa had begun receiving death threats related to her human rights work. Colleagues and family members urged her to relocate to a safer area or leave Sudan entirely. She declined. She was caring for a relative who needed daily support. Bahjaa made the decision to remain in the city despite the threats to her own life.

Between April and October 2023, at least seven other human rights defenders were killed in Darfur. They included Abd Elrazeg Adam Mohammed, Tareg Hassan Yagoub Elmalik, El Sadeg Mohammed Ahmed Haroun, Mohammed Ahmed Kudia, Khamis Arabab, and Khidir Sulieman Abdelmageed. Another defender, lawyer Ahmed Mohamed Abdella, was killed in Nyala. The pattern of killings indicated that defenders were being deliberately targeted by armed groups for their documentation and advocacy work.

The Killing

On 26 October 2023, Bahjaa attended the funeral of a relative in Kalma camp, a settlement for internally

displaced persons on the outskirts of Nyala. Kalma camp had been home to tens of thousands of people displaced by earlier waves of violence in Darfur and had become a site of renewed attacks during the 2023 conflict.

During the funeral, an unidentified gunman opened fire. Bahjaa was shot and killed. She was twenty-six years old. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, and no investigation into her killing has been announced by Sudanese authorities.

Context and Aftermath

Bahjaa's killing occurred in the context of widespread violence against civilians and human rights defenders in Darfur during the 2023 conflict. Armed groups operating in South Darfur have carried out targeted killings, mass displacement, and sexual violence against women and girls. Human rights defenders documenting these abuses have faced direct retaliation, including assassination.

Her death left her mother without her primary caregiver and her colleagues without a trusted partner in their work supporting survivors of sexual violence. The Women Revolutionary group and the Darfur Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders continue to operate in Darfur, though their members face ongoing threats and attacks.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/bahjaa-abdelaa-abdelaa/

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