

Advocacy dossier

Montaser Abdullah

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At liberty **Sudan**

Montaser Abdullah is a Sudanese lawyer who represented survivors of gender-based violence and defended members of the Tagadom political coalition. Detained from September 2024 and tried on terrorism and espionage charges, he was acquitted of those charges and released on 20 October 2025 after a cybercrime sentence covered by time served.

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The case at a glance

Montaser Abdullah is a Sudanese lawyer who represented survivors of gender-based violence and defended members of the Tagadom political coalition. Detained from September 2024 and tried on terrorism and espionage charges, he was acquitted of those charges and released on 20 October 2025 after a cybercrime sentence covered by time served.

Status	Arrested	Country
At liberty	**7 Sep 2024**	**Sudan**

Sentence Acquitted of espionage, terrorism, and charges of undermining the state. Convicted under the Cybercrimes Act and sentenced to one year and four months in prison plus a fine of one million Sudanese pounds (approximately 1,427 euros). Released after time served.

Charges Espionage (Article 53, Sudanese Criminal Act 1991)
Undermining the constitutional order (Article 85, Sudanese Criminal Act 1991)
Waging war against the state (Sudanese Criminal Act 1991)
Cybercrimes (Articles 9, 17, 24, 26, 27, Cybercrimes Act)
Terrorism offenses (Articles 5 and 6, Anti-Terrorism law)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Quash the conviction and drop any charges that remain on record against Montaser Abdullah in connection with peaceful human rights work.

02 Confirm publicly that Montaser Abdullah faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case.

03 Guarantee that Montaser Abdullah can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal.

04 Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

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Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Denial of legal counsel International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)

Denial of medical care UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 24 to 27

Enforced disappearance International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16

Inhumane detention conditions International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10
UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Physical assault International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 7, 9

Prolonged pretrial detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

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

Torture Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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How the case unfolded

5 September 2024

Summons

Taken to Security Cell premises without a warrant, then let go

He was taken to the premises of the Security Cell without a warrant, released and told to return on 7 September.

7 September 2024

Arrest

Abducted from his offices by Sudanese Armed Forces

On 7 September 2024, Montaser Abdullah was abducted from his offices by the Sudanese Armed Forces. No arrest warrant was issued. Authorities also forced him to waive his legal immunity as a practicing lawyer. His whereabouts remained unknown for nearly four weeks.

7 September 2024

Start of enforced disappearance

Held incommunicado, whereabouts unknown

After his arrest he was held incommunicado and without interrogation; his whereabouts were unknown for almost four weeks, until 3 October 2024.

3 October 2024

Reappearance in custody

Surfaces at Criminal Court of Red Sea State, Port Sudan

After almost a month of enforced disappearance, Abdullah was presented at the Red Sea State Criminal Court in Port Sudan and charged with espionage under Article 53 of the Sudanese Criminal Act 1991. He refused to confess and was moved to Port Sudan Central Prison.

25 November 2024

Context

UN experts write to Sudan

UN experts sent communication AL SDN 4/2024 to the Sudanese government about his case. No reply was received.

21 April 2025

Hearing

First trial session

The first court session took place with expanded charges including terrorism and cybercrimes offenses carrying a potential death sentence.

23 May 2025

Context

Second UN communication on his case

The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and another expert sent a joint communication to Sudan, made public on 15 August 2025 with no reply.

20 October 2025

Conviction

Acquitted of terrorism and espionage, convicted under the Cybercrimes Act

The Criminal Court in Port Sudan acquitted Abdullah of all charges under the Criminal Act and the Anti-Terrorism law, but convicted him under the Cybercrimes Act. He was sentenced to one year and four months in prison, counted from his arrest on 7 September 2024 and covered by the time he had already spent in custody, and fined one million Sudanese pounds.

20 October 2025

Release

Released after paying fine

On 20 October 2025 the Port Sudan Criminal Court acquitted Abdullah of all charges under the Criminal Act 1991 and Anti-Terrorism Law (espionage, undermining constitutional order, waging war against the State) but convicted him under the Cybercrimes Act, sentencing him to one year and four months in prison plus a 1,000,000 SDG (~€1,427) fine. The Court ruled the time he had already served since 7 September 2024 covered the sentence. He was released the same afternoon following payment of the fine.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again on 12 November 2026. Montaser Abdullah has been free since 20 October 2025, when the Port Sudan Criminal Court acquitted him of the espionage and terrorism charges and imposed a cybercrime sentence already covered by his time in custody; no appeal, new charge or restriction has been reported since.

Background and Work

Montaser Abdullah is a Sudanese lawyer who has focused much of his practice on representing survivors of gender-based violence, providing legal assistance in cases that often receive little attention or support within Sudan's legal system. His work placed him within a small community of lawyers willing to take on sensitive and politically charged cases during a period of intense conflict and repression.

In 2024, Abdullah became the legal representative for seventeen members of the Tagadom Coordination Committee, a political coalition that includes former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok among its leadership. The National Committee for Investigating Crimes and Violations of National Laws and International Humanitarian Law had brought accusations against these individuals. By agreeing to represent them, Abdullah took on a case with clear political dimensions at a time when the military authorities were tightening control over dissent.

Surveillance and Arrest

Following his decision to represent the Tagadom members, Abdullah came under sustained surveillance by state security forces. The monitoring of his movements and communications continued for several months. On 5 September 2024, authorities detained him briefly. Two days later, on 7 September, security forces arrested him formally.

During his arrest, authorities compelled Abdullah to waive the legal immunity granted to him as a practicing lawyer under Sudanese law. This immunity is intended to protect lawyers from arbitrary detention and interference in their professional duties. The forced waiver removed a key legal protection and signaled the nature of the proceedings that would follow.

Detention Conditions and Treatment

Abdullah was held in a small cell shared with other detainees, in conditions described by sources as deplorable. He was denied access to basic sanitation facilities and reportedly subjected to repeated beatings during his detention. According to accounts received by human rights organizations, authorities subjected him to treatment intended to degrade and humiliate.

These conditions persisted throughout the period of his pretrial detention. He remained in custody from September 2024 until his release in October 2025, a period exceeding one year.

Legal Proceedings

On 3 October 2024, Abdullah was brought before the Red Sea State Criminal Court in Port Sudan and formally charged under Article 53 of the 1991 Sudanese Criminal Code, which addresses espionage. He denied the charges and refused to

confess, despite what sources describe as coercion applied by the authorities during his detention.

The case did not proceed to trial until April 2025. On 21 April, the first court session took place. By that stage, the charges against Abdullah had expanded significantly. Military authorities brought additional charges under Articles 53 and 85 of the Sudanese Criminal Act of 1991, Articles 9, 17, 24, 26, and 27 of the Cybercrimes Act, and Articles 5 and 6 of the Anti-Terrorism law. The combined charges carried a minimum sentence of twenty years in prison, with the death penalty as the maximum possible sentence.

On 20 October 2025, the Criminal Court in Port Sudan issued its verdict. The court acquitted Abdullah of all charges under the Sudanese Criminal Act 1991 and the Anti-Terrorism law, including the allegations of espionage, undermining the constitutional order, and waging war against the state. However, the court convicted him under the Cybercrimes Act and sentenced him to one year and four months in prison, along with a fine of one million Sudanese pounds, approximately 1,427 euros.

The court ruled that the time Abdullah had already spent in detention, from 7 September 2024 to 20 October 2025, satisfied the sentence imposed. Following payment of the fine, he was released on the afternoon of 20 October 2025.

Context of Repression in Sudan

Abdullah's case occurred within a broader pattern of repression targeting lawyers and human rights defenders in Sudan since the outbreak of armed conflict in April 2023. Both the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces have been implicated in arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, and killings of legal professionals.

The targeting of lawyers undermines the rule of law and removes a critical layer of protection for those facing politically motivated prosecution. Abdullah's forced waiver of legal immunity, his prolonged detention, and the initial charges carrying the death penalty reflect the risks faced by legal professionals who represent individuals or groups viewed as politically sensitive by military authorities.

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

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