

# Fleeing War Does Not Mean Survival

Transnational Repression Against Sudanese Journalists in Egypt



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## Executive Summary

This report, issued by the Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF), documents serious patterns of transnational repression<sup>1</sup> targeting Sudanese journalists and media professionals who sought refuge in Egypt after fleeing the armed conflict that erupted in Sudan in April 2023 in search of safety and protection. Instead, they were confronted with the reality that leaving Sudan did not put an end to targeting, but rather relocated it to a new context in which repressive practices originating from the country of origin intersect with a fragile legal and security environment in the country of refuge.

The report focuses on three documented cases of Sudanese media professionals who were subjected to an interconnected series of violations that began inside Sudan and extended into Egypt. It also records additional incidents during 2025–2026 involving Sudanese journalists and writers in Cairo. These violations included physical assaults, digital threats, field surveillance, theft of documents, attempted assassinations, and campaigns of defamation and incitement—reflecting a recurring pattern aimed at silencing critical and independent media voices in exile.

The documented testimonies and incidents demonstrate that these violations do not constitute isolated individual cases, but rather form part of a systematic approach that can be described as a “three-dimensional siege.” This approach combines on-the-ground repression through physical attacks and direct surveillance; digital repression through threats, smear campaigns, incitement, and accusations of disloyalty; and legal and security pressure through malicious complaints, threats of reporting to security authorities, or the use of detention and deportation as tools of intimidation.

The report also documents the systematic targeting of journalists’ family members inside Sudan as a form of pressure to silence journalists in exile. This practice falls within what is known as “repression by proxy,”<sup>2</sup> whereby families are targeted to exert indirect pressure on media professionals because of their professional work and political positions. This pattern operates in tandem with direct forms of transnational repression faced by Sudanese

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<sup>1</sup> Transnational repression is a term used to refer to acts or practices carried out or directed by a state, its agents, or non-state actors acting at its instigation, with its consent, or in collusion with it, with the aim of deterring, silencing, or punishing political opponents, journalists, or human rights defenders outside the territorial borders of that state. This form of repression encompasses a wide range of tools, including digital threats, physical assaults, judicial harassment, and the targeting of family members in the country of origin, as well as the use of unofficial actors or “proxies” to obscure the state’s role and evade accountability.

<sup>2</sup> The term *repression by proxy* refers to the targeting of family members or close associates of dissidents and journalists within the country of origin in order to exert indirect pressure on them while in exile. This method is recognized as an established practice within transnational repression, according to the characterization of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

journalists inside Egypt, creating a compounded web of intimidation that transcends geographical borders.

The report further highlights that this interconnected repression exploits the legal precarity faced by asylum seekers in Egypt, amid tightened entry and residency policies and the use of detention and threats of deportation as means of pressure. This constitutes a serious failure to uphold the principle of non-refoulement and a violation of Egypt's international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as its duty to ensure the protection of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists on its territory.

The report concludes that, in these cases, Egypt has become an extension arena for transnational repression linked to the Sudanese conflict, where targeting by parties involved in the conflict inside Sudan converges with a legal and security environment lacking effective protection guarantees, allowing violations to persist without accountability.

The recommendations put forward in the report call for urgent action by the Egyptian authorities and relevant international mechanisms to ensure immediate protection for Sudanese media professionals, to conduct serious investigations into the violations committed, and to prevent the use of legal and security frameworks as instruments of intimidation and political coercion.

## Introduction

Over the past decade, Sudan has undergone pivotal transformations that have directly shaped the state of public freedoms, most notably freedom of expression and the press. This trajectory can be traced through four distinct periods marked by sharp fluctuations in levels of rights and freedoms. Understanding this context is essential to grasping the mechanisms through which repression has been reproduced in more complex and dangerous forms, including the phenomenon of *transnational repression* that this report seeks to highlight.

The first period was the era of the dictatorship of Omar al-Bashir, which began in 1989 and ended with his overthrow on 11 April 2019 following a sweeping popular uprising. This period was characterized by the imposition of a rigid security grip over freedom of opinion and expression, including the security and judicial persecution of journalists and media actors. Strict pre- and post-publication censorship was imposed on newspapers, within a restrictive legislative framework aimed at exerting full control over the flow of information and monopolizing the official narrative inside the country.

The second period followed the removal of the dictator, spanning 2019 to 2021, during which a wide window of hope opened and freedom of expression reached unprecedented levels. Political and legal pathways were pursued to dismantle the legacy of the former repressive system. Despite resistance from remnants of the old regime, the will for change prevailed. This period paved the way for the restoration of independent trade union activity, culminating in the convening of the constituent assembly of the *Sudanese Journalists Syndicate* on 26 March 2022, followed by its first elections in more than three decades on 27 August 2022.

The third period—what may be described as the “coup phase” following the military’s seizure of power on 25 October 2021—marked a turning point and laid the groundwork for the catastrophic humanitarian and freedoms situation witnessed today. This phase saw the systematic return of repressive policies, including widespread internet shutdowns, the suspension of radio stations and media outlets, and the revival of patterns of physical attacks and persecution against journalists and opinion holders.

The fourth and current phase represents the most severe period for human rights and press and media freedoms to date. This is a result of the ongoing armed conflict since April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, which has led to the direct targeting of journalists and media professionals, the killing of dozens of them, widespread destruction of media infrastructure, and the deliberate imposition of information blackouts to conceal crimes committed. This phase has not only reproduced repression in more violent forms and patterns, but has also turned Sudan into an extremely dangerous environment, prompting large numbers of Sudanese—including journalists and media professionals—to flee the country in search of safe haven.

Egypt—having itself experienced sharp political shifts since the January 2011 revolution and currently characterized by a restrictive environment for freedoms—emerged as one of the

primary destinations for fleeing journalists, owing to geographical proximity and historical ties, and based on the assumption that it would provide a minimum level of protection in line with international obligations related to refugees and freedom of expression. However, realities on the ground proved far more complex and perilous. Repression extended beyond borders, taking on a transnational character, alongside harsh Egyptian security measures and bureaucratic obstacles that deprived many of legal protection, amid fears of surveillance or forced return. Human rights reports have documented a pattern of ill-treatment of refugees by Egyptian authorities and their detention in inhumane conditions, placing Sudanese refugees between the hammer of transnational repression and the anvil of a hostile official environment.

This transnational repression perpetrated by parties to the Sudanese conflict has taken multiple forms, including physical assaults and digital threats, and has extended to targeting the families of media professionals inside Sudan as hostages for pressure abroad, in a practice known as “repression by proxy.” The objective is to impose forced self-censorship that transcends geographical boundaries.

The deteriorating legal and security environment in Egypt has been systematically instrumentalized as a tool of pressure to silence media voices. Threats of filing complaints with Egyptian authorities—aimed at triggering deportation proceedings—have become a recurrent means of blackmail to prevent journalists from documenting and reporting on war-related violations.

Against this backdrop of overlapping transnational repression and legal precarity, the protection of Sudanese journalists becomes an issue that transcends the humanitarian dimension and touches upon the core of states’ obligations under international instruments. This places an obligation on Egypt to regularize their legal status and fulfill its international commitments.

This report seeks to expose patterns of recurring violations and analyze their security and legal contexts, while shedding light on the on-the-ground, digital, and legal siege facing Sudanese media professionals in Egypt, as an extension of a conflict that crosses national borders. The report also presents recommendations addressed to relevant stakeholders, aimed at breaking this siege and ensuring an enabling environment that adheres to international standards for the protection of journalists.

## Methodology

This report adopts a qualitative documentation methodology to identify and analyze patterns of transnational repression through two complementary tracks. The first track is based on in-depth interviews with three representative cases of journalists and media professionals who were subjected to direct violations. These interviews are supported by documented evidence, including medical reports, security complaints, and records of digital threats.

The second track relies on *contextual monitoring* of publicly reported incidents of attacks and targeting against Sudanese writers and journalists in Egypt. These incidents were documented on the basis of statements issued by the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate and credible media reports.

This monitoring reveals that Sudanese media professionals are subjected to what can be described as a “three-dimensional siege.” Legally, this includes the filing of malicious criminal complaints against four prominent journalists on charges carrying penalties of up to the death sentence; digitally, at least nineteen cases of direct threats and accusations of disloyalty aimed at legitimizing violence; and on the ground, incidents of assault, abduction, and temporary enforced disappearance targeting journalists and photographers in the heart of the Egyptian capital. This integrated pattern indicates that the targeting of media professionals is not incidental, but rather constitutes an organized strategy aimed at silencing witnesses to war-related violations.

Given the serious security risks involved, the Foundation adhered to a strict source-protection protocol. This included withholding the identities of participants in the first track, while names were cited in the second track only in cases that had already entered the public domain.

The report acknowledges the existence of a statistical gap -which it does not seek to close-between the documented cases and the actual scale of violations, due to a prevailing climate of fear. This aligns with the assessment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which has noted that individuals targeted by transnational repression face significant obstacles in filing complaints.

Accordingly, the report does not claim to provide an exhaustive account of all violations. Rather, it presents these cases as illustrative examples that reveal recurring patterns of repression, within a context in which other targets refrain from providing testimony for fear of retaliation or as a result of “self-censorship” stemming from insecurity in the country of refuge. This lends the sample legal and methodological significance as representative of a broader phenomenon shrouded in enforced silence.

## Overview of Violations Against Journalists in Sudan

Since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, the situation of journalists and media professionals has deteriorated to an unprecedented extent. Journalistic work has become a high-risk activity amid direct targeting, systematic violence, and the near-total collapse of legal and institutional safeguards.

The Office of [the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)<sup>3</sup> (OHCHR) has documented a widespread pattern of serious violations committed in the context of the conflict, including the killing of journalists, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture. These violations have taken place within a framework of systematic restriction of civic space and the targeting of human rights defenders. The Office has warned that some of these violations may amount to war crimes and warrant international accountability.

According to the High Commissioner's report, at least twelve journalists were killed between the start of the conflict and November 2024, including two who died while in detention. At least thirty-one journalists—among them four women—were arrested and arbitrarily detained, many of whom were subjected to ill-treatment and torture. The report situates these violations within a broader context marked by near-total impunity and the rapid breakdown of justice institutions, significantly exacerbating the risks faced by media workers while covering violations or documenting crimes committed by parties to the conflict.

Data from the [Sudanese Journalists Syndicate](#)<sup>4</sup> corroborate this assessment. The Syndicate reported that at least thirty-two journalists were killed between the outbreak of the war and late 2025, in addition to the documentation of more than five hundred different violations against journalists and media workers. These violations included arrest and detention, physical assaults, destruction of media institutions, looting of equipment, and repeated threats. This escalation has resulted in a large-scale wave of forced displacement, compelling more than four hundred journalists to flee—either internally or to neighboring countries, foremost among them Egypt—in search of safety and protection.

In the same vein, [Reporters Without Borders](#)<sup>5</sup> has confirmed that since the outbreak of fighting, Sudan has become one of the most dangerous environments in the world for journalists. The organization noted a sharp escalation in attacks, threats, and violations

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<sup>3</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Sudan: Entrenched Impunity Is Fueling Gross Human Rights Violations and Abuses*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/02/sudan-entrenched-impunity-fuelling-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses>

<sup>4</sup> Sudanese Journalists Syndicate, *32 Journalists Killed Since the Outbreak of the Civil War in Sudan*, October 2025. Available at: <https://english.news.cn/africa/20251006/be64efd2ca2f49d2875d2e3fe30b95c3/c.html>

<sup>5</sup> Reporters Without Borders (RSF), *World Press Freedom Index 2025 – Sudan*; RSF/IFEX, *Silencing the Media and the Killing of Journalists in Sudan*, April 2025. Available at: [sudan](#)

against media professionals, leading to the near collapse of the media landscape and the silencing of independent voices that had played a pivotal role in documenting ongoing violations. The organization further stressed that the targeting of journalists by parties to the conflict, in the absence of accountability, constitutes a systematic attempt to control the public narrative of the conflict and conceal the scale of crimes committed against civilians.

This context reveals a systematic pattern that goes beyond these violations being mere collateral damage of the conflict, confirming instead that journalists and media professionals have become direct targets due to their role as witnesses to violations and conveyors of information.

It also demonstrates that the risks which compelled them to leave Sudan did not stop at the country's borders, but followed them into countries of refuge amid fragile legal and security conditions, rendering them particularly vulnerable to various forms of transnational repression.

This context forms the analytical foundation of this report's introduction and underpins its methodology in linking the environment of violations in the country of origin with the documented individual cases in the country of asylum, as examined in the sections that follow.

## The Legal and Political Context in Egypt as a Country of Asylum

Owing to geographical proximity and historical ties, Egypt has emerged as one of the main destinations for Sudanese refugees, who today constitute the largest group of registered refugees in the country following an increase of more than one thousand percent since the outbreak of the conflict. Many assumed that this route would offer a minimum level of safety and protection, based on the state's international obligations relating to refugee protection and the safeguarding of freedom of expression.

However, an official [UN communication](#)<sup>6</sup> dated 16 October 2025, submitted by a group of United Nations Special Rapporteurs to the Egyptian government, revealed troubling shifts in Egypt's legal and security environment that have directly affected the situation of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers.

In that communication, several Special Rapporteurs expressed deep concern over the escalating use of arbitrary arrests and forced deportations, including collective deportations. They stressed that these practices constitute a serious breach of the principle of non-refoulement, a well-established norm of customary international law, particularly in the absence of legal and procedural safeguards capable of protecting individuals fleeing conflict from being returned to conditions where they may face grave violations.

According to the information contained in the communication, the period between late 2023 and 2025 witnessed an increasing tightening of entry and residency policies in Egypt, accompanied by a notable rise in cases of detention and forced deportation of Sudanese nationals in both border and urban areas. These practices included individuals registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as others who were denied effective access to asylum procedures or the ability to challenge decisions related to their detention or deportation. The communication further concluded that administrative detention has increasingly been used as a preliminary tool to facilitate deportation, transforming it from an exceptional measure into a systematic practice with a deterrent character.

In this context, the [Law and Democracy Support Foundation](#),<sup>7</sup> together with twenty-two Egyptian and international human rights organizations, had previously expressed their rejection of the draft law on regulating asylum for foreigners in Egypt in its proposed form.

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<sup>6</sup> Mandate-holders for the following: the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, *Joint Allegation Letter addressed to the Government of Egypt*, Reference: **AL EGY 6/2025**. Available at: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30371>

<sup>7</sup> Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF), as part of a joint statement issued by 23 Egyptian and international human rights organizations entitled: *We Warn Against the Dangers of Adopting the Proposed Text of the Law on Foreigners' Asylum and Call for It to Be First Subjected to Societal Dialogue*. Available at: <https://ldsf.info/blog/2024/11/15/15-11-24-1/>

They warned against its expedited passage without genuine societal debate or the meaningful involvement of stakeholders, foremost among them refugees themselves and the organizations mandated to protect them. The joint statement noted that the draft law reflects a continuation of exclusionary policies and lacks an explicit commitment to international standards governing refugee protection, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention.

The statement also cautioned against a potential transitional vacuum should the law be implemented without a clear plan for the gradual transfer of responsibilities from UNHCR to the proposed national mechanism. It emphasized that establishing an effective national asylum system requires a preparatory period and close cooperation with institutions that have managed the system for decades.

The statement further highlighted the risks associated with the lack of independence of the Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs and the granting of broad powers based on vague terms such as “national security” and “public order,” which could open the door to restricting refugees’ rights and undermining the principle of non-refoulement—particularly with respect to the most vulnerable groups, including journalists and media professionals.

In the same vein, an in-depth analytical [study](#)<sup>8</sup> by the Refugees Platform in Egypt and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights concluded that the draft asylum law constitutes a fundamental regression from the existing legal framework and undermines the core protections guaranteed to refugees and asylum seekers. The study provided a detailed analysis of the draft provisions, arguing that it seeks to replace the current asylum system—operated in cooperation with UNHCR—with a purely national framework, without addressing the practical or legal shortcomings of existing policies, and without drawing on the expertise of relevant actors or consulting refugees themselves as key stakeholders.

The study demonstrated that the draft law, despite its formal inclusion of definitions derived from international conventions ratified by Egypt, introduces additional grounds for exclusion and denial of the right to asylum that are inconsistent with those instruments, thereby stripping refugee protection of its substantive effect.

It also relies on broad and indeterminate wording that grants the proposed committee wide discretionary powers in assessing asylum applications, withdrawing refugee status, or “taking whatever measures it deems necessary” in vaguely defined circumstances. This opens the door to the misuse of such powers without oversight or effective procedural safeguards.

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<sup>8</sup> Refugees Platform in Egypt and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Policy Brief on the Draft Law on Foreigners’ Asylum, 10 November 2024. Available at: <https://rpegy.org/en/editions/refugees-in-egypt-platform-and-the-egyptian-initiative-for-personal-rights-asylum-law-needs-real-societal-discussion/>

In another analytical human rights [commentary](#),<sup>9</sup> the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms deconstructed the draft's provisions as reflecting a decisive shift toward the “securitization” of the asylum system. This is achieved through the concentration of authority in the hands of a government committee subordinate to the executive branch, in the absence of clear standards for the selection of its members, guarantees of its independence, or defined mechanisms for its functioning and decision-making. The commentary noted that the committee's proposed composition—largely based on sovereign ministries—poses serious risks of prioritizing security considerations over human rights and humanitarian concerns, particularly in light of a documented record of violations against refugees and asylum seekers, including arbitrary detention and forced deportation in contravention of Egypt's international obligations.

The analysis further indicated that provisions regulating asylum procedures entail unjustified discrimination among asylum seekers based on their mode of entry into the country, by prolonging the processing of applications submitted by individuals who entered irregularly, despite the fact that they are often the most exposed to risk.

The draft law also grants the competent committee broad authority to take “whatever measures it deems appropriate” against asylum seekers on the basis of “national security” and “public order”—vague concepts lacking precise legal definition—thereby opening the door to restrictions on personal liberty, detention, or removal without effective procedural guarantees or immediate judicial oversight.

The commentary additionally noted that, although the draft law enumerates certain rights of refugees, it largely fails to clearly define the basic rights of asylum seekers during the examination of their applications and appeals, including protection from deportation and access to essential services. This omission creates a grave legal vacuum with far-reaching consequence

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<sup>9</sup> Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, [Commentary on the Draft Law on Foreigners' Asylum in Egypt \(Following Its Approval by the Defense and National Security Committee of the House of Representatives\)](#). Available at: [تعليق-على-مشروع-قانون-الهجرة-واللاجوء.pdf](#)

## Examples of Transnational Repression Against Sudanese Journalists in Egypt

Law and Democracy Support Foundation has documented three prominent examples of transnational repression that illustrate the gravity of this phenomenon and the patterns of violations perpetrated by parties to the conflict in Sudan, aimed at controlling and silencing journalists residing in Egypt. These cases are presented as illustrative examples rather than an exhaustive account of all violations faced by journalists, given the significant barriers to disclosure and the pervasive climate of fear imposed upon them. This fear stems, on the one hand, from the intimidation and terror exercised by parties to the conflict, and on the other, from the hostile official environment toward refugees in Egypt, as outlined above.

### Case One: Sudanese Journalist and Media Professional (A.M.)

Since March 2019, a Sudanese journalist has been subjected to systematic targeting due to his media and trade-union activities and his political positions. This targeting has included repeated summonses, arbitrary detention, physical assaults, and security surveillance by military intelligence and the National Intelligence and Security Service inside Sudan.

The violations began with his summons and detention in March 2019 for calling for peaceful demonstrations within a state-owned media institution, before his release after being compelled to sign a written pledge. On 2 April 2019, he was assaulted by riot police, resulting in a head injury and his suspension from work until 11 April of the same year. He was later re-arrested on 27 October 2021 in connection with professional statements opposing the 25 October coup, and was released after 48 hours on bail. Earlier, on 29 September 2021, he had been subjected to a violent physical assault that caused mobility difficulties lasting until March 2022.

With the outbreak of war in Sudan, he was arrested on 2 May 2023 by the Rapid Support Forces while fleeing Khartoum. He was beaten and robbed, including the confiscation of his media work equipment and unlawful access to his bank account data. After relocating to Al-Jazirah State, security services continued to pursue him through repeated summonses and arrests linked to his media activity and his coverage of peaceful anti-war demonstrations, including his detention on 4 and 5 December 2023. A criminal case was opened against him, and he was released on bail guaranteed by his workplace. This was followed by his re-arrest and detention in an unofficial civilian facility until 18 December 2023, forcing him to flee Sudan through irregular smuggling routes to Egypt.

Following his arrival in Egypt, the journalist was subjected to transnational persecution, taking the form of direct online threats beginning in February 2024, including surveillance and threats of pursuit. In August 2024, he was physically assaulted, his UNHCR refugee card was stolen, and he was threatened with harm to his family, prompting him to report only the loss of the card out of fear of escalation. He later received threats of being reported to the

Egyptian authorities, with explicit warnings of forced deportation linked to his media activities.

Targeting escalated further in 2025 and 2026 through repeated threats and indirect attacks, including the use of audio recordings of his past phone calls—obtained unlawfully—as tools of blackmail. This culminated in public death threats that included precise information about his family’s place of residence, forcing him to relocate his family for security reasons. In a particularly grave development reflecting the peak of cross-border intimidation and psychological pressure, the arrest of a family member inside Sudan was documented, with details of the detention used as leverage to silence him abroad.

These facts confirm a clear pattern of systematic political persecution and prolonged violence against journalists, amounting to a serious violation of the right to personal safety and protection from forced return.

## **Case Two: Sudanese Producer and Journalist (S.A.)**

The testimony of a Sudanese producer and journalist reveals a similar pattern of systematic targeting that began inside Sudan and later extended into Egypt. He was subjected to repeated arrests starting in 2018 due to his participation in peaceful protest movements. These included periods of detention at security facilities for varying lengths of time, among them an eleven-day detention in late 2018, and a detention lasting nearly one month in March 2019 following his arrest while accompanying colleagues who were carrying first-aid supplies intended to treat protesters. He was also subjected to a subsequent arrest following the 25 October 2021 coup.

In November 2022, he was violently assaulted by unidentified military forces, resulting in serious injuries to the head and eyes, as well as a permanent knee injury from which he continues to suffer to this day. The assault was linked to his political activity and his oppositional stance toward the authorities. The Foundation reviewed an official medical report issued on the same date, which included the results of an MRI scan of the right knee showing joint effusion, bone marrow edema, bone contusions, and a second-degree injury to the menisci, with intact ligaments—confirming the severity of the injury and the lasting nature of its impact.

After arriving in Egypt in April 2023 and working in media production for a Sudanese television channel, he was subjected in July 2025 to an on-the-ground attack in the Al-Labini area of the Haram district. The attack involved being pursued and deliberately struck by a car, resulting in multiple injuries. This was followed by direct death threats via phone calls and social media, which explicitly linked the threats to the incident.

He was then subjected to a second attack in the Al-Mohawalat–Tersa area of Cairo in September 2025, involving another deliberate vehicle collision while he was accompanied by members of his family. This was followed by threatening messages indicating that the senders had detailed knowledge of the previous attacks, reflecting a clear pattern of

intimidation. The campaign of psychological terror and digital threats continued to the point that he was forced to change his place of residence within Egypt for security reasons.

### **Case Three: Sudanese Photographer and Media Professional (Y.Y.)**

The third case reflects additional patterns of collective targeting linked to media work within the country of asylum, Egypt. A Sudanese photographer and media professional was subjected to a series of attacks and threats between February and October 2025 due to his media appearances and participation in political programs. These violations included a physical assault in February 2025 that resulted in bruises and abrasions, as well as the theft of his personal belongings, including his UNHCR card. This was followed by persistent threats accusing him of affiliation with armed parties to the conflict, explicitly linked to his participation in political media programs.

In September 2025, he was subjected to another assault near his residence while returning from a professional engagement, involving pursuit and physical beating. This was followed by attempts to defame him through malicious allegations made to residents of the neighborhood. Subsequently, on 24 September 2025, he was the victim of a violent group attack carried out by a group that included both Sudanese and Egyptian individuals, while he was accompanied by several fellow media professionals. The attack resulted in severe injuries to his legs, necessitating surgical suturing and casting, in addition to injuries sustained by his companions.

The targeting extended to members of his family. In October 2025, his younger brother was violently assaulted after attackers mistakenly believed him to be the intended target. They called him by his brother's name and attacked him using a bladed weapon, causing a fracture to the upper pelvic bone that required surgical intervention to stabilize the injury. The Foundation reviewed official medical reports confirming the nature of the injuries sustained by both brothers, underscoring the severity of the targeting and the expansion of its scope to include family members.

## General Monitoring and Additional Indicators

In addition to the three cases documented by the Foundation on the basis of direct testimonies and supporting evidence, the Foundation identified further incidents circulated in the media and on social media platforms indicating that critical Sudanese voices in Egypt have been subjected to acts of violence and targeting, within a context that intersects with patterns of transnational repression.

Media reports and widely shared posts indicated that a Sudanese writer [survived](#)<sup>10</sup> an attempted assassination in Cairo during 2025, following an attack outside his residence that resulted in physical injuries. This incident occurred in the context of prior threats linked to his political writings on the ongoing conflict in Sudan and violations committed against civilians, reinforcing the hypothesis of politically motivated targeting.

This incident falls within a broader pattern of assaults and threats against critical Sudanese voices outside the country and contributes to understanding the wider context of transnational repression targeting Sudanese cultural and media actors in Egypt.

Monitoring indicators released by [the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate](#)<sup>11</sup> further revealed the systematic use of judicial harassment as a tool of transnational repression aimed at intimidating media professionals abroad. This pattern is consistent with forms of transnational repression documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the misuse of judicial procedures, extraterritorial legal actions, digital threats, and incitement and criminalization rhetoric against opposition figures and journalists in exile. The Syndicate documented the initiation of malicious criminal cases against four journalists residing in countries of asylum by the Sudanese authorities, involving extremely serious charges carrying penalties of up to the death sentence, such as “undermining the constitutional order” and “waging war against the state.”

In parallel, the Syndicate recorded nineteen cases of direct threats and digital hate speech targeting Sudanese correspondents and writers abroad. These campaigns relied on accusations of betrayal and collusion in order to legitimize physical targeting, in addition to documenting incidents of administrative and on-the-ground harassment in countries of asylum. These measures included cases of temporary enforced disappearance and serious physical assaults, reflecting a clear integration between legal persecution from within Sudan and on-the-ground attacks abroad to impose a comprehensive siege on critical media voices.

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<sup>10</sup> SudaZool, *Media post on Facebook regarding the survival of a Sudanese writer after an attempted assassination in Cairo*, 24 May 2025. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/safesuliman999/posts/نجاة-الكاتب-السوداني-أحمد-إسماعيل-من-محاولة-اغتيال-في-القاهرة-القاهرة-سودان>

<sup>11</sup> Sudanese Journalists Syndicate, *Press Freedoms Report 2025: Monitoring and Documentation Report on Violations of Press Freedom and the Targeting of Journalists*, 2025. Available at: [https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=844534415078287&id=100085652089943&mibextid=wwXifr&rdid=hkkQ6P1KN9nlMwN2](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=844534415078287&id=100085652089943&mibextid=wwXifr&rdid=hkkQ6P1KN9nlMwN2)

## Legal Framing of the Violations

When considered collectively, the documented incidents set out in this report constitute serious violations of a range of binding international standards relevant to the protection of refugees, freedom of expression, the safety of journalists, and the protection of human rights defenders. These violations cannot be characterized as isolated incidents, as their recurring nature and their geographic and temporal interconnectedness reveal a pattern of transnational repression, in which threats, violence, and legal harassment are employed to silence media professionals outside their country of origin.

### First: Transnational Repression

The documented cases reflect a clear pattern of transnational repression, manifested in the continued targeting of journalists after their flight from Sudan to Egypt through digital threats, physical assaults, surveillance, and the targeting of family members inside Sudan as a means of indirect pressure. This pattern aligns with internationally recognized definitions of transnational repression, which refer to the use of pressure and violence by states, state-linked actors, or parties involved in armed conflicts against dissidents or journalists in exile, thereby undermining their right to safety and freedom of expression.

In this context, the incidents documented in this report intersect with the definition articulated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which [defines](#)<sup>12</sup> transnational repression as “acts carried out by States, or their agents, to deter, silence, or punish dissidents, critics, and human rights defenders outside their territorial borders.” This definition underscores that such practices are not limited to official state institutions, but also encompass non-state actors—such as militias and criminal networks—operating through instigation, consent, or collusion. This framework helps explain the repeated assaults carried out by “unknown groups” against Sudanese journalists in Egypt.

### Second: Violation of the Principle of Non-Refoulement

The testimonies reveal the recurring use of threats of deportation or reporting to the Egyptian authorities as a tool of intimidation against Sudanese journalists. This pattern constitutes a

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<sup>12</sup> *Transnational repression* is a term used to describe actions carried out or directed by states, their agents, or non-state actors operating with their instigation, consent, or acquiescence, with the aim of deterring, silencing, or punishing dissidents, journalists, or human rights defenders outside the state’s territorial borders. These actions employ a range of tools, including violence, threats, legal harassment, digital targeting, and the targeting of family members. See: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 18 June 2025. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/transnational-repression>

direct violation of the [principle of non-refoulement](#)<sup>13</sup> enshrined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which prohibits the return of any person to a country where they may face a risk of persecution or serious harm. Moreover, the creation of a persistent climate of fear surrounding deportation, in and of itself, undermines the core guarantees of international protection.

### **Third: Violation of the Right to Physical Integrity and Protection from Ill-Treatment**

The documented physical assaults, whether committed inside Sudan or in the country of asylum, constitute violations of the right to physical integrity and the right to be protected from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, as guaranteed under [the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).<sup>14</sup> The gravity of these violations is compounded by their repeated nature, the diversity of perpetrators involved, and their extension to family members, all of which indicate a clear intent to inflict physical and psychological harm for the purposes of deterrence and intimidation.

### **Fourth: Violation of Freedom of Expression and the Protection of Journalists**

The documented cases demonstrate that the targeting was directly linked to journalistic activity, appearances in political programs, the production of critical media content, or the possession of information of a public and sensitive nature. This constitutes a clear violation of the right to freedom of expression and of international standards for the protection of journalists during and in the aftermath of conflict.

Such violations are not limited to censorship or obstruction, but extend to the use of physical violence and death threats as methods of silencing. This generates a chilling effect<sup>15</sup> that impacts not only the directly targeted individuals, but also the broader media space in exile, undermining the ability of journalists collectively to work freely and safely.

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<sup>13</sup> The principle of non-refoulement is one of the fundamental principles of international refugee law. It prohibits the direct or indirect return of any person to a state where they may face a risk of persecution, torture, or other serious human rights violations. This principle is enshrined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and is also recognized as a well-established norm of customary international law. See: *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)*, Article 33. Available at: <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/rights-and-duties/principle-of-non-refoulement/>

<sup>14</sup> The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* guarantees the right to physical integrity and imposes an absolute prohibition on torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Article 7 of the Covenant. This prohibition encompasses acts that intentionally inflict physical or psychological harm, whether committed by state authorities or non-state actors, where the state fails in its duty to prevent such acts, provide protection, or conduct effective investigations. Available at: [international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights](#)

<sup>15</sup> The term *chilling effect* is used to describe the indirect impact of threats, violence, or legal harassment on freedom of expression, whereby the targeting of specific journalists or media actors deters broader groups from expressing their views or participating in public debate. United Nations mechanisms have documented this effect as an extended violation of freedom of expression that goes beyond the individuals directly targeted.

## **Fifth: Misuse of Legal Proceedings**

The documented incidents further reveal the systematic use of legal procedures as a tool of repression, through the initiation of malicious criminal complaints against journalists in exile on extremely serious charges carrying penalties that may extend to the death sentence.

This pattern constitutes a clear example of the abuse of law—known internationally as *Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)*<sup>16</sup> -whereby the judicial system is instrumentalized as a means of intimidation and silencing, rather than as a mechanism for the pursuit of justice.

## **Sixth: Targeting of Human Rights Defenders**

The journalists whose cases are documented in this report fall within the scope of protection afforded to human rights defenders, given that their media work is directly linked to documenting violations, holding authorities accountable, and informing the public. Targeting them through surveillance, threats, and physical attacks therefore constitutes a clear violation of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which obliges states to take specific measures to protect defenders from any acts of violence, retaliation, or reprisal.

## **Seventh: Failure of the Host State to Fulfill the Duty of Protection and the Right to an Effective Remedy**

Under international human rights law, states bear a duty of due diligence to protect all persons within their jurisdiction from violations committed by non-state actors. The recurrence of assaults, coupled with the absence of effective investigations, indicates a failure to comply with the obligation to provide protection, as well as a violation of the right to an effective remedy as guaranteed under the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

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<sup>16</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *The Impact of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) on Human Rights and How to Respond*, 29 April 2024. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/brochures-and-leaflets/impact-slapps-human-rights-and-how-respond>

## Challenges in Identifying the Perpetrators

The documented testimonies point to a complex human rights and security dilemma related to accurately identifying the organizational affiliation of the actors who carried out acts of targeting against Sudanese media professionals inside Egypt. While those targeted generally agree that these attacks are linked to Sudanese parties involved in the conflict, the manner in which the violations were carried out—through “unknown groups” or “individuals in civilian clothing”—complicates direct criminal attribution. This places these incidents within what UN literature describes as the “grey zones”<sup>17</sup> of transnational repression. In this context, the perpetrators may be characterized as *non-state actors*<sup>18</sup> whose actions are likely carried out with the instigation, consent, or acquiescence of parties involved in the conflict.

Nevertheless, three key indicators strongly support the conclusion that this targeting is political in nature and carried out in an organized manner:

- 1. Convergence of agendas:** The selection of targets reflects a precise and deliberate pattern aimed at journalists who expose violations, indicating intentional and selective targeting.
- 2. Nature of the information used:** The threats included detailed information about residences and movements, pointing to the existence of organized security and logistical capacities behind the attacks.
- 3. Intersection of incitement rhetoric with on-the-ground violence:** Physical assaults coincided with digital smear and incitement campaigns conducted through platforms affiliated with parties to the conflict, demonstrating a coordinated escalation from online incitement to physical harm.

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<sup>17</sup> The term “grey zones” is used in United Nations literature to refer to patterns of violations carried out in deliberately ambiguous spaces that conceal the identity of the responsible actors. This obscures criminal attribution and hinders legal accountability, and is considered a common characteristic of practices of transnational repression. See: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Transnational Repression*, 18 June 2025. [transnational-repression](#)

<sup>18</sup> The term *non-state actors* refers to individuals, groups, or networks that do not operate within formal state frameworks, but may act with the instigation, consent, or acquiescence of authorities or parties involved in armed conflicts. This pattern has been documented in the context of transnational repression. See: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Transnational Repression*, 18 June 2025. [Transnational-repression](#)

These challenges intersect with findings by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the “[protection gaps](#)”<sup>19</sup> faced by individuals targeted by transnational repression. Such individuals often encounter serious obstacles in filing formal complaints, obtaining protection, or seeking reparations, due to fear of the authorities in the host country or the limited capacity of those authorities to monitor and hold accountable “proxies” linked to other states or parties to armed conflicts. In this context, the deliberate operation of perpetrators within so-called “grey zones” does not negate international responsibility for these violations. On the contrary, it underscores the transformation of transnational repression into a systematic tool of intimidation that exploits evidentiary difficulties and the complexity of criminal attribution to evade accountability, thereby reinforcing the urgent need for intervention by relevant international mechanisms.

## Conclusions: Patterns of Transnational Repression and Mechanisms of Intimidation

The documented facts presented in this report lead to the conclusion that the violations faced by Sudanese journalists and media professionals cannot be understood as a series of isolated incidents. Rather, they constitute a systematic pattern of transnational repression that has extended from within Sudan to the country of asylum.

The documented cases reveal a closely similar trajectory that begins with targeting inside Sudan and continues after departure through a set of compounded repressive tools operating within Egypt. This pattern has reached an advanced and particularly dangerous stage through the use of repression by proxy, including the targeting of journalists’ family members inside Sudan as a means of exerting pressure on them in exile. The testimonies further demonstrate that transnational repression has been reinforced through the exploitation of the legal precarity of asylum seekers, alongside threats of deportation.

This situation generates a chilling effect that extends beyond the directly targeted individuals to negatively affect the broader media environment in exile, undermining journalists’ ability to work freely, safely, and independently.

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<sup>19</sup> The term “*protection gaps*” is used in United Nations literature to refer to institutional, legal, and practical shortcomings that prevent individuals targeted by human rights violations—particularly in the context of transnational repression—from accessing effective protection, filing complaints, or obtaining remedies. These gaps result from factors including fear, the absence of appropriate mechanisms, or the limited capacity of host-state authorities to monitor and ensure accountability for perpetrators. See: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Transnational Repression*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/transnational-repression>

## Recommendations

**Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF)** recommends that the following measures be taken:

### **First: To all parties to the conflict in Sudan, including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and all affiliated armed groups:**

1. Immediately cease all forms of targeting of journalists, media workers, writers, and critics, both inside Sudan and abroad.
2. Refrain from harassment, threats, intimidation, violence, or reprisals against journalists based on their professional work or critical opinions.
3. End the use of transnational repression, including threats, surveillance, or attacks against Sudanese journalists in exile, whether directly or through proxies.
4. Comply fully with obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, particularly the protection of civilians and freedom of expression during armed conflict.
5. Ensure accountability for violations committed against journalists and create conditions that allow for safe and independent journalistic work.

### **Second: To the Egyptian Authorities**

1. Ensure prompt and effective investigations into all physical attacks and threats targeting Sudanese journalists and media professionals on Egyptian territory, and hold those responsible accountable in accordance with the law.
2. Investigate the activities of individuals or networks suspected of acting as agents or non-state actors on behalf of parties involved in the Sudanese conflict, and take appropriate legal measures, in accordance with the rule of law and human rights standards, to prevent the use of Egyptian territory as a venue for transnational political retaliation.
3. Adopt effective preventive measures to protect journalists and media professionals at risk, including the establishment of safe mechanisms for reporting threats without fear of detention or deportation.
4. Refrain from using residency or asylum laws as tools of pressure or intimidation, and strictly adhere to the principle of non-refoulement in all procedures related to Sudanese individuals fleeing the conflict.
5. Implement relevant United Nations recommendations on transnational repression, in particular by conducting systematic investigations into digital and physical threats, to ensure that refugees' personal data or administrative status are not turned into security vulnerabilities exploited by those involved in targeting them.
6. Regularize the legal status of refugees in Egypt, fulfill international obligations, and put an end to practices that deprive them of access to legal protection frameworks.

### **Third: To the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate**

1. Activate the role of the Syndicate's Freedoms Committee to monitor violations against Sudanese journalists and media professionals in Egypt, recognizing them as part of the broader journalistic community bound by shared professional and historical ties.
2. Grant associate memberships or temporary identification cards to Sudanese journalists facing persecution, in order to formally recognize their professional status and help reduce the risks of targeting or misidentification in their interactions with administrative authorities.
3. Provide legal support through the Syndicate's lawyers to file complaints and follow up on investigations in cases of physical assault and blackmail, and to ensure that the authorities address these incidents as crimes targeting journalists, rather than treating them as ordinary or incidental altercations.
4. Allocate space within the Syndicate's premises or through its digital platforms to shed light on the risks of transnational repression, and issue solidarity statements rejecting the use of Egyptian territory as an arena for political reprisals against journalists and media professionals.

### **Fourth: To the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

1. Activate the "highest priority" processing track for asylum applications submitted by journalists facing transnational persecution, in order to reduce the period of legal precarity during which they remain without formal protection documentation.
2. Strengthen coordination with the Egyptian authorities to ensure effective protection for asylum seekers against politically motivated threats and attacks.
3. Support the documentation of cases of transnational repression and refer them to the relevant United Nations mechanisms.
4. Provide specialized training and technical support for Sudanese media professionals in Egypt in the field of digital security, to counter surveillance, hacking, and online blackmail campaigns, which constitute a central tool in this pattern of repression.

### **Fifth: To Relevant United Nations Mechanisms**

1. Call on the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, to follow up on cases of transnational repression targeting Sudanese media professionals in the country of asylum.
2. Utilize individual communications procedures and urgent appeals to exert pressure for the provision of immediate protection to those at risk.
3. Incorporate the phenomenon of transnational repression into periodic reports addressing the state of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists in the region.