

Press Release: A New Victim in an Uneven War: No Mercy in Sudan on International Women's Day

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On the eve of International Women's Day we as Sudanese women and women from across the Horn of African countries and regions, are shocked by the brutal death of Awdeia Ajabana after she was shot inside her own home in Aldeam Neighborhood, Al Khartoum city. Her murder serves as a harsh reminder of the vast struggle women still face in attaining dignity and human rights in Sudan and across the region.

On the 5th of March 2012, the 39 year old woman was shot in the head by the notorious Sudanese Public Order Police who have become specialists in terrorizing women. Awadeia was killed while arguing with the Public Order Police who were accusing her brother who was sitting at the steps of their front door at home of abusing alcohol. Her brother, in his twenties, was talking on the phone when they started to assault him. Neither Awdeia nor any of her family members (women and children) who were inside the house were armed when she and other family members (including her mother) were shot .

Awdeia , originally from the Nuba mountings was a political activist and had been a candidate of the *Sudan National Labour Party* in the last elections in 2010. She was well known and respected in the Aldeam neighborhood, both as an activist and as a person.

The brutality of the Sudan Pubic Order Police against the women and girls of Sudan is part of an ongoing battle to impose a fundamentalist moral order upon society and women are frequently the first victims where their lives are devalued in relation to their male counterparts.

SIHA have urged and called on the Sudanese government to urgently reform the Sudanese criminal code and abolish the Public Order Regime in particular the state based public order laws and articles 151 152, 154,156, of the criminal code that emphasise restrictions on women's dress, conduct and manner of social interaction and allow the Public Order Police unlimited authority that often leads to the violent and humiliating persecution of women such as through public lashings.

Two years ago Nadia Saboon, a tea seller in central Khartoum market, fell onto a metal stake in the street while fleeing a sweep by the public order police in central Khartoum against street vendors. She bled to death on the main road. Today the public order police are killing women inside their own homes, this is a one-sided battle where the Public Order Police's exploitation of power, violence and aggression directly targets women.

We are calling on the United Nation and its related organs, the African Union, members of the international community and women and human rights organizations to denounce this killing and demand the Government of Sudan address its impunity towards violence against women and to abolish all forms of discriminatory and degrading laws against women and girls.

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The public order regime in Sudan is a set of laws and mechanisms which prohibit and enforce a range of behaviour from dancing at private parties, to "indecent dress" to the concept of "intention to commit adultery". These offences can be interpreted with great latitude and are enforced by a special police and court system with a reputation for violence and summary justice. Procedures before the public order courts completely fail to meet fair trial standards and involve the imposition of severe penalties including lashing and execution.

For a detailed analysis of the public order regime see [Beyond Trousers: the Public Order Regime and the Human Rights of Women and Girls in Sudan](http://www.sihanet.org/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=6), by the Strategic Initiative on Women in the Horn of Africa-(SIHA) at http://www.sihanet.org/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=6

*The **Strategic Initiative on Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)** is a network of civil society organizations from across the Horn of Africa, inclusive of Sudan and with its headquarters in Kampala, Uganda. SIHA builds capacity within women's organizations, and advocates for gender equality for men and women. Key focus areas include eliminating violence against women, economic justice and challenging legal systems that violate the rights of women or create an environment of impunity for violence against women.*