

## EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

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**Geneva:** Strengthen national and international human rights monitoring in Sudan

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) hope to set the scene ahead of next week's release of the latest report by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Sudan by organising a panel event on Sudan tomorrow, the 9th of June 2009, at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The panel event will offer an overview of the dire human rights situation in the country and highlight the ongoing importance of maintaining and strengthening the mandate of the Special Rapporteur notably in light of the increasingly scarce national and international human rights reporting and monitoring mechanisms on the ground.

EHAHRDP will use the opportunity offered by the event to continue its efforts aimed at drawing attention to the increasing restrictions on freedom of expression, media and association.

Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, EHAHRDP's Executive Director, will draw attention to the current clampdown on the national human rights organisations, notably the closure of the three leading organisations, as well as the ongoing and increasing restrictions on the independent media, notably daily pre-print censorship and a new draft media legislation which if passed will largely fail to put national legislation in line with the provisions of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. This clampdown has clearly significantly reduced the capacity for national human rights monitoring and reporting.

*“The human rights situation in Sudan has become highly politicised; yet, the reality on the ground leaves no doubt that the Khartoum government is seeking to use every means at its disposal to clampdown on all forms of independent civil society resulting in a significant gap in national human rights monitoring and reporting”, says Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh. “Sudan is at a critical turning point – notably as a result of the on-going peace initiative in Darfur, key steps in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement including the scheduled elections for 2010 and the referendum of 2011. Human rights defenders can play a crucial part in ensuring that these events take place in a successful manner, that lasting peace is achieved and that human rights are implemented on the ground. It is essential for the Khartoum authorities and other key stakeholders in Sudan to respect the rights of defenders.”*

Mr Shire will therefore call on key actors to give human rights defenders, both activists and journalists, the attention and support they require and to strengthen current mechanisms in place to monitor and report on the human rights situation on the ground.

The panel event will take place **tomorrow (Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2009) from 13h-15h in Room XXII of the Palais des Nations.**

For more information please do not hesitate to contact Mr Hassan Shire, Executive Director of EHAHRDP on + 41 7933 758 75 or Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at EHAHRDP on + 256 775 141 756 or [advocacy@defenddefenders.org](mailto:advocacy@defenddefenders.org).