

Human Rights Council: 33rd Session
Adoption of Sudan's UPR Outcome
21st September 2016

Oral Intervention
Association for Progressive Communications
Delivered by: Deborah Brown

Thank you Mr. President.

I am speaking on behalf of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Sudan UPR group.

We note the engagement of Sudan in the Universal Periodic Review process. We remain concerned about violence against women journalists and human rights defenders, and violations of freedom of expression, assembly, association, and privacy, including in the online environment.

Incidents of sexual violence against women journalists, particularly those who work with print media, are dramatically increasing. A 2015 research study with women journalists from 20 newspapers revealed that 85% of respondents have experienced sexual violence. Newspaper institutions have no policies for protection measures, or for raising awareness of violence against women journalists.

Mr. President, we are gravely concerned about the government's establishment of a "Cyber Jihadist Unit", and use of remote control systems and sophisticated computer spyware, which allows the government to filter web content, censor internet communication, and spy on the political opposition, human rights defenders, and journalists. The use of surveillance technology violates the right to privacy and has a chilling effect on freedom of expression, association and assembly online, placing human rights defenders at an even greater risk of reprisal.

We are gravely concerned about the government's actions to block access to the internet and communications services. On 25 September 2013, authorities shut down access to the internet throughout the country for more than 24 hours during demonstrations against the government's economic policies. In the following days, the internet was slowed down drastically. Authorities have sporadically blocked access to YouTube, as well as media sites.

We encourage the urgent implementation of recommendations to improve freedom of expression, including by ending impunity for attacks on journalists, especially women journalists, and to take concrete measures to ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders, civil society actors, and journalists. The government must ensure that the human rights are protected online and refrain from intentionally preventing or disrupting access to or dissemination of information online in line with HRC resolution 32/13.

Thank you.