



Press Release

KENYA: NCHRD-K and DefendDefenders condemn the killing of human rights defender

John Waweru in Nairobi

13 April 2016

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders – Kenya (NCHRD-K) and Defend Defenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) are outraged by the killing of human rights defender John Waweru on Monday 11 April 2016 in Zimmerman, Nairobi.

John Waweru was the director of Githunguri Constituency Ranching Company and an avid and committed human rights defender working towards the promotion and protection of economic and social rights.

NCHRD-K and DefendDefenders are alarmed at the trend of attacks against human rights defenders in Kenya related to their work on land and environmental rights. Mr Waweru was at the forefront of advocacy against forced evictions of individuals residing on contested land in Kiambu County.

The killing of John Waweru, which is believed to be related to his human rights work, comes shortly after the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the protection of human rights defenders addressing economic, social and cultural rights (A/HRC/31/L.28) in March 2016.

The NCHRD-K and DefendDefenders express grave concern about the lack of accountability for perpetrators of harassment, intimidation, and physical and sometimes lethal attacks against human rights defenders in Kenya.

Joel Ogada, a human rights defender in Kilifi County who has been a leading advocate for land rights against the neighbouring Salt farms has faced three criminal charges, one of which resulted in him being sentenced to two years in prison after appeal. He was released in September 2015 and barely six months after his release, in March 2016, he was rearrested and charged with attempting to kill.

In 2013, Hassan Guyo, the Programme Director for Strategies for Northern Development (SND), an organization that promotes human rights for women and children and works on refugee and human trafficking issues in Moyale was killed by security forces. In 2009, HRDs Oscar Kingara and Paul Oulu of Oscar Foundation were shot dead in Nairobi. In all of these matters, no one has been held to account and police investigations have been inconclusive.

The protection and promotion of the work of HRDs is anchored in international human rights norms. In 1998, a UN General Assembly resolution adopted the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders that codifies the international standards protecting the activities of HRDs around the world. Though not binding, the provisions within this document are echoed in the Kenyan constitution. Despite these international standards, HRDs in Kenya are still operating in a hostile environment.

The NCHRDK and DefendDefenders call on:

- The Inspector General of Police and the Directorate of Public Prosecutions to launch a comprehensive, impartial and independent investigation into the killing of John Waweru without delay;
- The Kenyan Government to put in place mechanisms, including a legal framework, for the protection of human rights defenders in Kenya and ensure a conducive working environment for HRDs; and
- The international community to strongly condemn the killing of John Waweru, whose human rights work greatly contributed the livelihoods of his constituents.

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