

25 September 2020

Uganda: Attack against eight members of Nubian Human Rights Defenders

On 30 August 2020, women human rights defenders **Malhasan Yahya, Asya Adris, Kemisa Mariam** and **Sophia Gala**, and human rights defenders **Jamal Adris, Bakhit Hussein, Abdallah Idris** and **Walid Khalid** were assaulted by several unidentified individuals armed with machetes, hoes and sticks in Kakerenge village, Wakiso District. Some of them have been severely injured and require intensive care. The defenders have filed a complaint at Kasangati police station and an investigation has been opened.

[Malhasan Yahya](#), [Jamal Adris](#), [Bakhit Hussein](#), [Asya Adris](#), [Abdallah Idris](#), [Kemisa Mariam](#), [Walid Khalid](#) and [Sophia Gala](#) are human rights defenders and members of Nubian Human Rights Defenders, a group created by members of the Nubian community in Uganda. The group aims to protect and promote the rights of the Nubian minority community, who face institutional and other forms of discrimination particularly with regard to their land rights.

On 30 August 2020, after holding a meeting with several Nubian community members in Kakerenge village to discuss the evictions and land grabbing to which they had been subjected, eight members of Nubian Human Right Defenders were assaulted by unidentified individuals armed with machetes, hoes and sticks. The roughly thirty attackers followed the defenders onto the main road, continuing to attack them as they attempted to flee. The Nubian defenders and community members managed to escape with motorcycle (Boda Boda) drivers who brought them to the nearest hospital. Kasangati police subsequently opened an investigation into the incident.

The eight human rights defenders suffered serious injuries, with some requiring intensive care and surgery. Woman human rights defender Malhasan Yahya lost an eye in the attack and others are being treated for broken limbs. Some community members were also seriously injured. Malhasan Yahya, reportedly recognised an individual among the assailants who attacked her, and who is known in the community for being involved in local land grabs.

Four days previous, on 26 August 2020, human rights defender Bakhit Hussein was beaten by unidentified individuals that are believed to have also been land grabbers. The attack occurred after the defender asked the individuals if they had documents to support their claim of ownership to some of the local land. Bakhit Hussein reported the assault to Matugga police station. He was told that his case was transferred to Kasangati police but he has not been informed of any further information to date.

The defenders believe that the attacks against them are in reprisal for their human rights work opposing eviction and land grabbing in the Nubian community's territory. Since 2017, Nubian community members have reported evictions and house demolitions carried out without adequate prior consultation or compensation, and despite the community possessing titles to the land. Members of the Nubian community reportedly filed several complaints for trespassing, malicious damage, and assaults, but police have provided no update on investigations to date.

Both before and after the recent attacks took place, several members of Nubian Human Rights Defenders received phone calls from the attacker that Yahya had recognised, who threatened them with death if they did not leave the land or if they continue to pursue their human rights work opposing evictions and land grabbing in the community. Following these threats, the defenders issued a complaint at Kasangati police station. The land grabber also reportedly called the Chairperson of the Local Council and two members of the Nubian community after the attack on 30 August and threatened them.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the attack against Malhasan Yahya, Jamal Adris, Bakhit Hussein, Asya Adris, Abdallah Idris, Kemisa Mariam, Walid Khalid and Sophia Gala. Front Line Defenders believes that they are being targeted solely for their peaceful and legitimate work defending human rights of the Nubian minority community.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Uganda to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Malhasan Yahya, Jamal Adris, Bakhit Hussein, Asya Adris, Abdallah Idris, Kemisa Mariam, Walid Khalid and Sophia Gala ;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack against the eight defenders and the Nubian community members, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Strongly condemn the attack against the eight defenders as it is believed the attack is directly motivated by their peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Uganda are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including harassment and threats.