

RWB: Opinion writer gunned down outside Juba home

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Reporters Without Borders

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SOUTH SUDAN

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Reporters Without Borders is deeply saddened to learn that Diing Chan Awuol, a leading columnist and critic of South Sudan's government, was gunned down outside his home in Juba in the early hours of yesterday.

An advocate of peace between the two Sudans, Awuol wrote frequent columns for the Sudan Tribune and Gurtong websites and the newspaper Destiny under the pen-name of Isaias Abraham.

"His death is a tragic setback to the hopes cherished by South Sudan's defenders of freedom of opinion since independence," Reporters Without Borders said. "We hail the determination displayed by the South Sudanese police, who have pledged to carry out a thorough and effective investigation.

"The way this case is handled will be test for freedom of information and free speech in this young nation. Only a tireless fight against impunity for crimes of violence against journalists and other news providers will preserve these freedoms, which are the basis of democracy."

Several journalists such as Alan Boswell, Taban Bonifacio and John Madol Panther have been the target of recent intimidation attempts after criticizing the South Sudanese authorities. Awuol's last column, published on the Sudan Tribune website on 28 November, [was a renewed call for peace between Sudan and South Sudan](#).

When interviewed by a Reporters Without Borders representative in May 2012, information and media minister Barnaba Marial Benjamin took pride in the fact that no South Sudanese journalist had ever been killed in connection with his work.

While the motive for Awuol's murder has yet to be established, the threats he had received in connection with his columns suggest that it was directly linked to the views he expressed.

One of Awuol's relative told the Sudan Tribune: "I knew he would one day be assassinated for his writings and I told him to stop but he said he would prefer to die than to stop writing."

For more information on the state of freedom of information in South Sudan, see the Report "[World's youngest country yet to embark on road to civil liberties](#)" released in July 2012.