



A man walks past the mural painting of Babikir Anwar on the wall of the family home in the neighborhood of Shambat, in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. — AFP photos



Maiyssa Omar (right), the mother of Walid Abdelrahim sits in front of the mural painting of her son, ornating the family home in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.



Pupils gesture in front of a mural painting of a protester killed during anti-government protests in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

Sudan murals commemorate protest 'martyrs'

Sudanese protester Walid Abdelrahim was shot dead last month in Khartoum but for his mother he is still alive—thanks to a colorful mural of his smiling face on a wall of their home. “The painting keeps him alive,” said Maiyssa Omar, her voice choking as she talked of her son, who was killed during a three-day nationwide civil disobedience campaign in June. The campaign had been launched in response to a brutal raid on a weeks-long sit-in in the capital on June 3 that left dozens of demonstrators dead and hundreds wounded. “When I see his painting ... it gives me strength. I feel proud to be a mother of a martyr,” Omar told AFP as she looked at her son’s face painted on the wall of their one-storey house in Bahri, a northern district in Khartoum.

The portrait is part of a campaign launched by Sudanese artist Asil Diab to draw murals and graffiti to commemorate demonstrators killed in the months-old protest movement that has rocked the northeast African country. Doctors close to the protest movement say 246 people have been killed across Sudan since demonstrations erupted in December. Officials have given a lower death toll. The protests initially broke out against the regime of veteran leader Omar al-Bashir. Following his ouster by the army on April 11, protesters continue to agitate against the ruling generals who seized power. These murals are specifically drawn on the walls of protesters’ own homes or in their neighborhoods.

‘Immortalize their legacy’

Diab, a former employee of Doha-based Al-Jazeera television network, and her team got their motivation from a protest catchcry: “Our martyrs didn’t die, they are alive among the revolutionaries!” “The idea is to immortalize their legacy in their own homes and to make the people of their neighborhoods proud of a martyr who sacrificed his life for Sudan,” Diab, 29, told AFP by telephone from Doha. “Graffiti makes martyrs come alive and reminds people of them even if the people themselves did or did not support the revolution.”

Diab, who lives in the Qatari capital with her family but



Sudanese artist Asil Diab (left), walks in front of a mural painting of Mohamed Mattar, on the wall of a youth club in Bahri in the capital Khartoum's northern district.

often returns to her homeland, said painting each mural costs her about \$635 given the high prices of colors and tools she uses. “But martyrs took to the streets and died for us. This is the least we can do for them,” said Diab, who has drawn about 30 portraits of protesters killed in Khartoum. For years such artwork remained underground amid censorship imposed by heavy-handed security agents of Bashir’s regime, who considered it anti-establishment or pure vandalism.

But artists say everything changed since the protests erupted, with dozens of murals flourishing across Khartoum’s walls since the initial weeks of the uprising. The capital’s neighborhoods like Bahri, a regular site of protests, became a canvas for artists like Diab. One such painting on a blue coloured wall of a youth club in Bahri is of protester Mohamed Mattar, who was one of dozens killed in the June 3 raid on the protest camp. “This painting

inspires me to participate in the protests to achieve the demand of those who died for us,” said Bahri resident Mujahid Sadeq. “I didn’t know Mattar before, but now we all know him.”

‘Dangerous experience’

A student in Britain, Mattar was back to visit family and had just celebrated his 26th birthday when he decided to spend a night with the demonstrators at the sit-in. His death in the raid had evoked a campaign of solidarity on social media under the hashtag #blueformattar. “We decided to draw his face here because this is a big area where the maximum number of people can see it,” said Eythar Gubara, a member of Diab’s team. Some of the paintings Diab has drawn are also of protesters killed in a September 2013 crackdown on anti-austerity rallies.

They include Babikir Anwar whose face Diab has

drawn on a wall of his family’s home in the neighborhood of Shambat. “We will not forget you Bakur,” is written below the painting, referring to his nickname. “It makes me feel that he is with me, as if he is sitting in front of me,” said Anwar’s mother Adawiya Mohamed, dressed in a black traditional robe. “I’m happy that Sudan still remembers his legacy.”

Diab said drawing the graffiti had not been easy. Often her team faced resistance from the feared paramilitary group the Rapid Support Forces, who are accused by rights group of carrying out the June 3 raid. “It was a dangerous experience, but worth taking the risks,” Diab said. “I was interested in immortalizing the legacy of these martyrs in the best way that I knew ... through graffiti.” — AFP



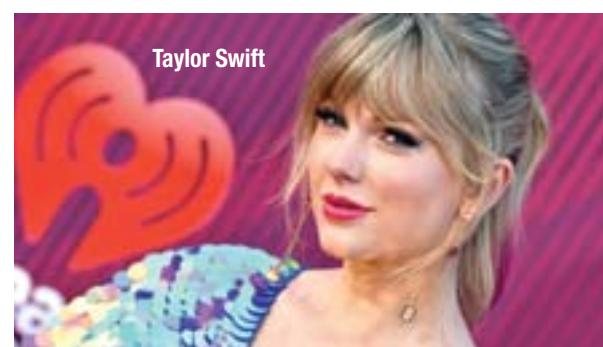
Pupils gesture in front of a mural painting of a protester killed during anti-government protests in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.



A mural painting of a Sudanese protester killed during anti-government protests ornates the wall of a building.

Man with burglary tools arrested outside Swift home

An Iowa man who traveled to small-town Rhode Island planning to “visit” pop superstar Taylor Swift has been arrested and charged with possession of burglary tools, police said Tuesday. David Page Liddle, 32, was arrested and charged with possession over the week-



end after police discovered him in the beachfront town of Westerly with items including more than 30 lock picks, a window-entry rake and an aluminum baseball bat. According to the local newspaper, which first reported the story, Liddle was coming “to catch up with Taylor Swift” and insisted he knew her personally.

Police chief Shawn Lacey confirmed those details to AFP Tuesday. The Westerly Sun indicated that Liddle had been on a watch list and quoted Lacey as saying he “may have visited other properties belonging to Taylor Swift in the past.” The suspect was taken into custody without incident and issued a no-contact order prohibiting him from coming near or attempting to reach any of Swift’s properties. He will also undergo a mental health evaluation. It is not the first time Swift—who was not in Rhode Island over the weekend—has faced unwanted visitors: in March an alleged stalker was arrested for the second time in less than a year for breaking into her Manhattan home.

Roger Alvarado, who had already been restricted from coming near Swift’s apartment in the Tribeca neighborhood, broke a window and entered the loft in the middle of the night when the singer was away. In April 2018 he had used a ladder to climb through a window into her apartment, also when she wasn’t home. Swift, who has cited violence as one of her “greatest fears,” reportedly has deployed facial recognition technology at some concerts in a bid to identify potential stalkers in the crowd. — AFP

Country folk icon John Prine postpones tour for stent surgery

Grammy-winning American singer John Prine will reschedule upcoming tour dates after doctors advised him he faced a stroke risk and needed surgery, his family said Tuesday. “In consultation with his doctors, John has been advised that he has an elevated risk for a stroke. He will have surgery this week to insert a stent which will remedy the issue,” read a statement on his Instagram signed by the 72-year-old performer’s family and record label. “He looks forward to a full and speedy recovery.”

A prolific songwriter and often whimsical performer, Prine last month was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. He has had past surgeries for cancer in his neck and lung. The statement said Prine’s eight-date summer concert schedule would be shifted back, with the next date, a July 28 show at Colorado’s Red Rocks venue, moved to September 18. “All original tickets will remain valid” and refunds are available at the point of purchase the statement said. “Thank you for your support and understanding.”

The news comes months after Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger, 75, also underwent a heart procedure, caus-

ing a rash of fan fear as the British rockers postponed a string of tour dates. The ever-energetic Jagger returned to the stage last month and the Stones are currently playing the rescheduled dates. — AFP



In this file photo US singer-songwriter John Prine performs onstage during the 2019 Songwriters Hall Of Fame Gala at The New York Marriott Marquis in New York City. — AFP