

Nancy Muigei

I am a human rights activist and poet from Kenya. My interest in participating in this creative work was inspired – by my observation of society, in particular, the shrinking civic space and impact on human rights defenders. I wanted to give voice to the work of human rights defenders through poetry. I wanted to see the world through their eyes. I wanted to critically interrogate how human rights defenders live, what they go through, what they victims experience, and societal perceptions about human rights defenders. I focused on the following research findings ‘well-being and risk, identity and security, and perception of human rights defenders.’ I discovered my voice as a poet whilst in high school, but only began publishing in 2010 following the unresolved death of human rights defender Olu GPO. I wrote this poem ‘The Voiceless Cry’ published by Pambazuka to honour his memory and the work he stood for.

The Voiceless Cry

The silent cries of the innocent,
Abandoned in the dark,
Stabbed in the night,
Shot by the wayside,
By masked men in ‘plain clothes’

We not know their names
We know their masters
Actions of intimidation
The voiceless cry!

Seekers of truth strangled
Maimed in daylight...

We have seen them,
We know them
But in little whispers we talk of them;

Intimidated by the lack of;
Crucified for the act of;

Bailing for the blood of the innocent
Kill and maim for what they cannot provide

The voice of the voiceless
Crying in the silent wilderness
Strangled by very powers we pay

We have seen them abduct kill and maim
We have seen them tap and disconnect
In fears we live
In confidence we cry

They abduct
They kill
And silence
Yet the voiceless die in the silent
Those with voice are now in borders
Those with voice never will return – Olu,
Kingara
Those with voice fear

When will the new dawn rise?