

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sudan-two-journalists-could-be-hanged-28-01-2011,39414.html>

Africa - Sudan

Charges dropped

Two journalists facing death penalty acquitted

2 February 2011

Reporters Without Borders hails with relief the news that on 1 February **Abouicha Kazem** and **Abdelgader Bakash**, journalists from the weekly *Bar'ut* who faced the death penalty, were acquitted.

According to the Eastern Africa Journalists Association (EAJA), the authorities in Khartoum abandoned the charges against the two men, who were accused of attacking the Sudanese constitution because they had raised the possibility of a partition of the east of the country in the context of the referendum on self-determination in the south.

"But Reporters Without Borders regrets that the two journalists, held in prison since 10 January last, had to pass three weeks in detention, "the press freedom organization said.

"The way they were treated was undoubtedly a measure of intimidation. The dropping of the charges against them proves that there was no case against them, other than that they had expressed a point of view. "

"The organization calls on the Sudanese authorities to pay greater respect to the expression of opinions."

28-01-2011- Two journalists could be hanged for discussing secession

Reporters Without Borders is dismayed to learn that two newspaper journalists based in the eastern city of Port Sudan have been accused of trying to overthrow the constitution, a charge punishable by hanging, just for raising the possibility of eastern Sudan's secession in an article.

The press freedom organization calls on the judicial authorities to see reason. It is utterly unacceptable that these journalists are facing a possible death sentence. The courts must respect the Sudanese constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression.

The two journalists – **Abdelgader Bakash** and **Abouisha Kazem**, the editor of the weekly *Bar'ut* – were arrested in Port Sudan on 10 January, one day after Kazem published an article by Bakash referring to the start on 9 January of a referendum on self-determination for South Sudan and calling for self-determination for the extremely impoverished east of the country.



After 11 days, the journalists were transferred to Khartoum, where they appeared in court yesterday. Trying to overthrow the constitution was the most serious of the eight charges brought against them. The hearing was adjourned pending the arrival of witnesses from Port Sudan.

“The death penalty is in itself a human rights violation and applying to two people just for writing an article just compounds its monstrosity,” Reporters Without Borders said. “The authorities should be magnanimous about an article inspired by the example of South Sudan. It is natural that the historic referendum in the south should prompt a political debate which these two journalists just reflected, exercising their right to freely impart information.”

In other developments, the authorities blocked the printing of the newspaper *Ajras al-Huriya* on 20 January, delaying its publication by several hours, and arrested Islamist opposition leader Hassan al-Turabi, the owner of the newspaper *Rai al-Shaab*, on 18 January. The authorities closed *Rai al-Shaab* on 16 May and three of its journalists are serving jail sentences. [More information](#).

Photo : AFP
