



Sudan

Sudan: Arbitrary arrests and detentions and act of

10 February 2011

A protest for freedoms inspired by the events in Tunisia and Egypt severely repressed by the National Intelligence and Security Service

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its member organisation the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) strongly condemn the ongoing repression by Sudanese authorities against peaceful demonstrators who call for democracy and the respect of human rights in the country.

On January 30, 2011, mass demonstrations were organised in Khartoum, Omdurman, Wad Medani, and Kosti by the "Youth for 30 January Change Alliance", a coalition of student movement groups supported by opposition parties who, inspired by the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, mobilized thousands of activists through social networking. The demonstrations called for President Omar al-Bashir to abdicate power, and for the National Congress Party (NCP) to rescind austerity measures imposed to combat the economic effects of Southern secession.

In all the cities where the demonstrations took place, the police forces together with National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) agents attacked the demonstrators using tear gas, water pipes and sticks. More than one hundred of students and some journalists who were covering the events have been arrested.

Our organisations also confirm that some human rights defenders are also detained, such as Abelazim Mohamed Ahmed, Director of the Khartoum branch of the Eastern Centre for Culture and Legal Aid, arrested on February 2, 2011, and currently being held incommunicado.

According to our sources, some students arrested during the 30 January demonstrations were released on bail after providing their home addresses, but a great number remain detained and accused of rioting. Witnesses have reported widespread use of torture through methods of electric shock, sleep deprivation, and detainees being stripped of their clothes and made to wear only underwear.

Since the demonstrations, the capacity of opposition-affiliated newspapers to report on the protests and broader political affairs in the country has been largely incapacitated. Four newspapers have been censored since the protests: Ajrass Alhurria, Al Sahafa, Al Alyoum, and Al-Midan, with the first two newspapers being forbidden to be distributed after they covered the 30 January demonstrations. Staff of Al-Midan have been arrested on the evening of the 2 February and are currently being held incommunicado.

Despite of the strong repression ordered by Sudanese authorities, calls for new demonstrations have continued via social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. However, these methods are starting to be infiltrated by the NISS: a demonstration arranged by text on 3 February led to arrests, with some activists fearing that NISS

themselves had sent out the message. President Bashir himself had called on his supporters to use Facebook to fight the opposition. Detainees have been forced to give their e-mail passwords and other social networking sites. In response, activists are trying to use more secure methods via leaflets and new meeting spots. Our organisations call on the Government of Sudan :

- To fully respect freedom of expression and association protected by Article 39 of the Interim Constitution and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Sudan ;
- To stop any excessive use of force by police and NISS agents against demonstrators ;
- To immediately release all detainees arrested in association with demonstrations ;
- To take all necessary measures to put an end to acts of torture and to open independent investigations to bring perpetrators of such acts before justice ;
- To lift censorship over newspapers ;
- To protect the rights of human rights defenders, in conformity with the UN Declaration on human rights defenders adopted in 1998 ;

Our organisations call the international community, notably the United Nations, the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the European Union to condemn the excessive use of force against demonstrators, the arbitrary arrests and detentions and acts of torture committed by police and NISS agents, as well as censorship, and to call on the Government of Sudan to fully respect national and international human rights provisions.

<http://www.fidh.org/A-protest-for-freedoms-inspired-by-the-events-in>