

Persecution

## Government harasses opposition weekly, arrests journalists and several employees

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Reporters Without Borders firmly condemns government harassment and intimidation of the Arabic-language opposition weekly *Al-Midan*, the Sudanese Communist Party's mouthpiece, because of its coverage of street protests on 30 January. The security forces have kept it under constant surveillance for the past few days, seized copies of its latest issue, and arrested its journalists.

"The authorities are clearly persecuting this newspaper with the aim of reducing it to silence," Reporters Without Borders said. "The detained journalists must be released at once and must be allowed to go back to work without being subjected to further harassment."

"I express my great concern and deep solidarity with my colleagues and all the Sudanese journalists, calling upon the authorities to stop harassing them. I consider this attack is the worst of its kind in the history of censorship in Sudan", said Faisal Elbagir, an *Al-Midan* journalist and founder of Journalists for Human Rights (JHR), who was forced to leave his country in early 2009 because of his activities.

On the night of 31 January, security forces went to the place where the newspaper is printed and seized all the copies of the latest issue that were there. On 2 February, they surrounded the newspaper's headquarters and arrested anyone who came out, including its editor-in-chief assistant **Kamal Karrar**, who was roughed up. Layout designer **Khalid Tawfiq Ibrahim Mirghani Fatma Albashir, Fathia, Samir Salaheldin** and receptionist **Mohamed Rahma** were also arrested and the newspaper's archives were seized.

Reporters Without Borders already condemned the [arrests of journalists as they were covering the 30 January demonstrations that took place in several cities including Khartoum and Omdurman](#).

"We are appalled to see that, instead of defusing tension and listening to the demands from young people, who made up the bulk of the demonstrators, the authorities are stepping up the repression, especially as regards the media that covered the protests," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The already disturbing press freedom situation has visibly worsened in the past few days as the authorities try to suppress coverage of events. We urge the government to stop persecuting journalists and to stop obstructing the free flow of information."

Sudan is ranked 172nd out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. Five journalists are in jail and about 10 have been arrested in the past week.

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