

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sudan-a-journalist-from-al-midan-21-01-2015,47523.html>

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Africa - Sudan

Gagged

## A journalist from Al-Midan newspaper in government's sights again

21 January 2015

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**Reporters Without Borders is very alarmed that Madeeha Abdella, editor-in-chief of the Sudan Communist Party newspaper *Al-Midan*, is facing a possible death sentence on a charge of crimes against the state brought by the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS).**

The charges against her, brought on 13 January, appear to have been prompted by an interview with one of the military commanders of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), a separatist movement based in North Kurdufan state. The government has banned all media coverage of Sudan's rebel movements.

The NISS has also filed a complaint against the newspaper's political editor, **Ibrahim Mirghani**, and one of its reporters, **Suleiman Hamed**, accusing them of defaming the government.

*"We are extremely disturbed by the charges against Madeeha Abdella, which carry the death penalty, and we condemn the judicial harassment of Al-Midan's journalists and the repeated closures to which it has been subjected,"* said Cléa Kahn-Sriber, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Africa desk.

*"If the government has a complaint to make against this newspaper, it should do so under the press law, not the criminal code. This misuse of the criminal code betrays the punitive intent of a government that has repeatedly gagged the news media it dislikes."*

Kahn-Sriber added: *"Coverage of security issues linked to military activity in Sudan is in the public interest. The public has a legitimate right to be kept informed. The censorship and terror that are being imposed suggest that President Omar Al-Bashir is taking a short-term political view. We urge him to be more open."*

Abdella, who was released on bail on 14 January, appeared in court yesterday on four charges of conspiracy, undermining constitutional order, urging the opposition to use violence and force against the government, and publishing false information (under articles 21, 50, 60 and 66 of the criminal code respectively).

She told Reporters Without Borders: "I feel strong and confident due to solidarity with *Al-Midan* and me inside Sudan and outside." Mirghani and Hamed also appeared in court at yesterday's hearing. The next hearing is scheduled on 16 February.

*Al-Midan* is currently forbidden to publish a print edition although it continues to appear on line. This is the sixth suspension of this kind in recent months. Twenty of its issues were seized in 2012 before it was banned for a year, until June 2013, without a court order.

Abdella had defiantly continued to produce an online issue that was available on the Communist Party website and had been subjected to other judicial proceedings.

Managing editor **Kamal Karar** attributed the latest suspension to the party's political positions. The newspaper is well known for its outspoken criticism of the government and its constant refusal to submit to prior censorship by the NISS.

The climate for freedom of information in Sudan is extremely oppressive. Last year, the NISS

tightened its grip on the print media by insisting on checking content prior to publication, a censorship method that resulted in the seizure of more than 50 newspaper issues in Khartoum in 2014.

Sudan is ranked 172nd out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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