

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sudan-call-for-an-end-to-harassment-of-10-05-2012,42595.html>

Africa - Sudan

Acquitted

Court acquits journalist who was hounded by intelligence officers

31 May 2012

Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn that **Faisal Mohammed Salih**, a freelance journalist who had been harassed by the National Intelligence and Security Services ever since he criticized President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in an interview for *Al-Jazeera* on 24 April, was acquitted today on a charge of refusing to cooperate with the authorities.

"We welcome the decision to acquit Salih on this trumped-up charge," Reporters Without Borders said. "In Sudan, criticizing the government can have consequences for journalists, including acts of intimidation, arrest and criminal prosecutions. Journalists end up censoring themselves out of concern for their safety. The intelligence officers who harassed Salih should be punished."

After giving the *Al-Jazeera* interview, Salih was summoned to NISS headquarters every day for nearly two weeks and each time was made to wait for up to eight hours without being interrogated. Then he was jailed for six days until released on bail pending today's trial before a criminal court in Khartoum.

Agence France-Presse reported that, when announcing today's verdict, the judge said he had taken account of the fact that the NISS had put his life in danger by refusing to give him food or water while making him wait for hours at a time each day.

Salih is due to appear in court again on a different matter on 11 June.

16.05.2012 - Freelance journalist released on bail, to face trial

Freelance journalist **Faisal Mohammed Salih** was released on bail yesterday after being held for six days by the security forces in Khartoum. He is to be prosecuted on a charge of refusing to cooperate with the authorities under article 94 of the criminal code, which is punishable by a month in prison and a heavy fine.

"Salih deserves a public apology from the Sudanese authorities for this constant harassment but instead they are keeping up the pressure by bringing criminal charges," Reporters Without Borders said. "We call for the immediate withdrawal of the charges and for guarantees that he will be able to resume working without any further harassment."

He was arrested on 9 May after being made to report to the office of the National Intelligence and Security Services in Khartoum every day since 25 April and spend six to seven hours there each time without being interrogated. The harassment began after he criticized President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in an interview for *Al-Jazeera* on 19 April.

2012.05.10 - Call for an end to harassment of detained journalist Faisal Mohamed Salih

The freelance journalist and human rights activist **Faisal Mohamed Salih** was arrested arbitrarily today in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. The day before, he was held for eight hours at the office of the security forces where he was given nothing to eat or drink.

Reporters Without Borders is outraged at the violence and pressure to which the journalist, a former editor of the newspaper *Al-Adwa*, has been subjected for almost two weeks.

"We ask the Sudanese authorities to call a halt to such cruel intimidation, bordering on physical and psychological torture," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The aim of these repeated detentions is to push him to his limit and at the same time to prevent him from doing his job. We call for Faisal Mohamed Salih's immediate and unconditional release."

On 25 April, Salih was summoned to the office of the National Intelligence and Security Services in Khartoum where he was questioned by officers for several hours about critical comments he made about President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in an interview with *Al-Jazeera* on 19 April.

The next day, he was once again called the NISS office and subsequently spent seven hours a day there every day, until his arrest, without being questioned and with no legal proceedings or judicial investigation being undertaken against him.

"The constant harassment to which he has been subjected is further proof of the repressive attitude towards the press on the part of the Khartoum government, whose intention is to silence all dissident voices," the press freedom organization added.

On 22 and 24 April and 3 May, the intelligence service seized all copies of the opposition newspaper *Al-Midan* as soon as it had completed its print run. No clear reason was given.

Besides preventing Sudanese citizens from being informed, this method of censorship causes severe financial losses for the media organizations concerned, which face a stark choice of self-censorship or closure.

Photo: Faisal Mohammed Salih (Deutsche Welle/K.Danetzki)
