

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

Index: AFR 54/036/2011  
11 November 2011

### **Sudan: Government crackdown on activists and political opponents**

Amnesty International is alarmed by the recent wave of arbitrary arrests of activists, trade unionists and perceived or known members of opposition parties and peaceful demonstrators in Sudan. In October alone, over 100 people were arrested in and around Khartoum, the capital. Many of those arrested have stated that they were subjected to torture or other ill-treatment in detention.

#### **Arrests of peaceful protestors**

Throughout early October hundreds of people took to the streets to demonstrate against the rising cost of living in Sudan. The Sudanese authorities responded by using tear gas and batons to disperse the peaceful protestors, and arbitrarily arrested activists.

On 3 October, three members from the activist group *Youth for Change* were arrested by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) for peacefully protesting about high food prices in the Al Thora area of Khartoum. The three were released after three days of interrogation, during which they stated that they were tortured by the NISS. Following this on 11 October, the NISS raided the home of Majdi Akashas, the *Youth for Change* spokesperson, and detained both Majdi Akasha and his wife Sara Mohamed Alhassan for one day. Sara Mohamed Alhassan's computer was also confiscated and she was ordered to report back to the NISS for the two following days.

The 2010 National Security Act provides the NISS powers to search and seize assets and arrest and detain people without judicial oversight.

On 6 October, residents of Masudiya town, south of Khartoum, began demonstrating against high electricity and water prices. The authorities responded by imposing a curfew on 8 October and reportedly closing down shops in the town centre. Over 22 people were arrested on 10 October, including a mentally disabled man who was detained for three days and beaten while in custody. A 13 year old boy was also arrested and subjected to 20 lashes, as ordered by the court. He was released on the condition that he obtained a written statement from his older brother, who had participated in the demonstrations, stating that his older brother would not participate in future demonstrations.

Corporal punishment is cruel, inhuman and degrading and prohibited by the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the ICCPR. In addition, children should not be subjected to the regular criminal process, but treated in line with the provisions of the CRC, which has been ratified by Sudan.

#### **Clampdown on members of opposition parties**

On 18 October, Abbas Al-Awad, aged 85, who is a trade unionist and senior member of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), was arrested from his home in Alkalakla, Khartoum at 10am. He said that he was arrested and detained for one day for making a speech in a private meeting on the "Juba Alliance," comprised of the SPLM-N and other opposition parties. The alliance was formed in April 2010, ahead of the referendum to determine the independence of South Sudan. On 1 November, activist and SPLM-N member Izdihar Jumma was arrested for the eighth time this year due to her affiliation with the political party. She was detained for two days.

On 21 October, the NISS raided the home of Dafallah Musa, during a regular meeting of a number of political parties in the Alkalakla district of Khartoum. Over 10 people were detained and many reported they had been tortured for 15 days, after which some were made to sign a document stating they would not be involved in political activities, or else face further detention, and they were ordered to report to the NISS on a regular basis from then on.

Amongst those arrested and detained on 21 October was Awad Abbas Al-Awad, aged 49 who is an English teacher and member of the Communist Party. He stated that the security forces surrounded the house and four vehicles filled with men carrying guns raided the house and terrorized the whole area. He said that they took them to an isolated building near the Republic Castle and kept them in the building for three days without food or sleep. They were forced to stand with their hands up to their faces next to a wall while the NISS continued verbally abusing them. After three days the NISS took those detained to the main NISS building in Bahri and continued interrogating them for several hours a day, until they were released.

Alameen Bilal Mukhtar, aged 32 and a member of the Umma Party said that one of the security forces kicked him on his right eye and then two men held him by his hands and feet while a third flogged his back. He was also subjected to verbal abuse.

Amnesty International calls on the Sudanese authorities to immediately stop the arbitrary arrests, harassment and intimidation of activists and to respect their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. All individuals must be able to exercise these rights and carry out their legitimate political activities without fear of intimidation and harassment.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is strictly prohibited under international law. Amnesty International calls on the Sudanese authorities to ensure that no one is subjected to torture or other ill-treatment by security forces or other agents of the state; to undertake prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, to ensure that the victims receive reparations and that those responsible are prosecuted in trials which comply with international standards without recourse to the death penalty.

### **Background**

The protests in October follow demonstrations from January to April 2011 in Sudan, when thousands of people gathered throughout the country to demonstrate in favour of democracy and against deteriorating socio-economic conditions.

On 30 January over 70 people were arrested in Khartoum, including a large number of people in the streets before they reached the demonstrations. The NISS and riot police reportedly started searching for demonstration organizers the night before. Many of those arrested were reportedly tortured or ill-treated and at least one student demonstrator, Mohamed Abdelrahman, died in hospital on 31 January after being injured by the police. Amnesty International is not aware of any measures taken by the Sudanese government following these demonstrations to investigate reports of torture or ill-treatment, or excessive use of force by the police.

Since June, over 200 perceived and known members from the SPLM-N have reportedly been arrested after conflict broke out between the Sudanese forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Southern Kordofan and spread to Blue Nile on 1 September. On 16 September, the Sudanese government banned 17 political parties affiliated with South Sudan, including the SPLM-N. The SPLM-N is the successor of the SPLM that shared power with the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), prior to South Sudan's independence on 9 July.

The 2010 National Security Act provides the NISS powers to search and seize assets and to arrest and detain people for up to four and a half months without judicial oversight. Article 50

of the Act allows for NISS agents to arrest and detain people for up to 30 days without judicial review. That detention period can be extended for a further 15 days by the Director of the NISS. Under Article 50, the case can further be referred to the National Security Council which can extend the detention period for three more months.

The total period of detention without judicial review can therefore be up to four and a half months, in violation of Article 9(3) of the ICCPR which calls for anyone arrested or detained to be promptly brought before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power.