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## **South Sudan: Tensions spiral after security forces clampdown on Wau protests**

Tensions are spiraling in South Sudan's Western Bahr El Ghazal State following a series of arrests by the state authorities and a security clampdown that has left 24 dead and more than 60 injured, Amnesty International said today in a new report.

The organization is calling for a thorough investigation into the largely unreported events of December 2012 in the wake of a controversial decision to relocate Wau County headquarters.

On 8 and 9 December 2012, security forces killed 11 people following road blocks and protests in Wau town. The protests began over the state government's decision to move Wau County headquarters from Wau to Bagari – a town 19 kilometres away.

“The failure of the authorities to ensure proper investigations into the events in Wau County in December 2012 has allowed tensions to mount,” said Amnesty International's Africa Director, Netsanet Belay.

“Those responsible for unlawful killings, including the security forces responsible for killing protesters must promptly be held to account.”

Since the unrest in December, scores of people deemed to be opposed to the policies of the state government, have been arrested and accused of instigating the protests in addition to their alleged involvement events in the lead up to them– including around 13 people on 12 February 2013. Trials are due to take place this week, but no members of the security forces have been held to account for shooting and killing protesters.

“These arbitrary arrests contravene the law in South Sudan. Many of the detainees were initially held for up to two months, without being questioned about any offence they are alleged to have committed, with no access to a lawyer and with no arrest warrant ever being shown,” added Belay.

Unnecessary force has also been used to arrest people - for example, three vehicles filled with members of the security forces turned up at the home of a former Wau County commissioner at 10.30pm on 31 December 2012.

They reportedly beat his sons and brothers, threatened other family members, ransacked his house and destroyed his furniture in an attempt to find him.

Amnesty International calls on the Government of South Sudan to investigate killings and human rights violations which have taken place in connection to the Wau Country relocation protests since December 2012 and to ensure that all those who carried out the unlawful killings are brought to justice.

The organization is also calling for reparations for the families of victims of unlawful killings, and for the

rights to freedom of expression and association to be respected.