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## **Sudan: End protest crackdown**

Amnesty International has called on the Sudanese government to end its crackdown on freedom of expression following the arrest of at least 70 people at demonstrations inspired by those in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen.

One student is reported to have died, scores were injured and more than 70 were arrested after armed riot police and security services used batons and teargas to break up Sunday's protests in Khartoum and Omdurman.

"The government must immediately open an independent and impartial investigation into the circumstances which led to the death of Mohammed Abdelrahman, a student who had taken part in the demonstration, and who died in Omdurman hospital as a result of his injuries," said Erwin van der Borgh, Africa Programme Director at Amnesty International.

Agents of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and police are said to have beaten protesters while NISS agents were also said to be searching for organizers of the demonstration the night before they began.

A large number of people were arrested in the streets before they had reached the demonstration.

Around 20 people are reportedly still held in NISS custody, including seven journalists who were arrested while covering the demonstrations.

On Monday evening, more than 25 protesters were released. The number of those who remain in detention is still unknown. Journalists remain in NISS detention.

"Journalists detained must be immediately and unconditionally released and allowed to resume their work. The Sudanese people should be allowed their right to freedom of expression," said Erwin van der Borgh.

Ajrass Al Hurriya, an opposition newspaper, was stopped from going to print on Monday morning while the independent Al Sahafa newspaper, was also banned by the NISS from distributing its Monday edition after it was printed.

More than 2,000 people are reported to have gathered in various parts of Khartoum and Omdurman on Sunday calling for democracy and for improved standards of living.

"People have had enough. Twenty two years are more than enough" one of the demonstrators, who was beaten by the police and cannot be named for security reasons, told Amnesty International. "The people's money is spent on security; security services to protect themselves (the ruling party)."

Students rallied inside their universities and there were reports of clashes between the demonstrators and

the police as well as supporters of the National Congress Party, Sudan's ruling party ,after the police used force to disperse the peaceful demonstration.

Dozens of demonstrators were taken to hospitals in Khartoum, some with severe injuries. Some protesters are still missing.

The unrest came on the day it was announced that 99 per cent of the south Sudanese population had voted for independence from the north.

"As the people of southern Sudan celebrate the preliminary results of the referendum, people in northern Sudan continue to face violations to their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The Sudanese government's failure to even allow the reporting of events, and to uphold its people's freedom of expression must end," said Erwin van der Borgh.