Sudanese security agents raid newspaper offices

Amnesty International calls on Sudan to release 16 people seized during a raid on a newspaper headquarters in Khartoum.

Amnesty International has learned that 16 people, including nine members of staff working with the Communist party-affiliated newspaper Al-Midan, were arrested by National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) agents on Wednesday night.

According to witnesses around 20 armed security agents dressed in plain clothes surrounded the Al-Midan offices for hours and arrested 16 people as they were leaving the building, including the deputy editor and the political correspondent. The officials gave no reason for the arrests.

The detainees are being held incommunicado and have not had access to a lawyer or their families.

"The Sudanese government must immediately release all those detained during this blatant attempt to stifle free speech," said Erwin van der Borght, Amnesty International's Africa Program director.

"The people of Sudan have every right to peaceful protest without fear of arrest, assault and harassment. And the media have every right to freely report these events."

Another demonstration in Khartoum today was also followed by an unknown number of arrests amongst protestors. Two female journalists were reportedly amongst those arrested.

The Al-Midan newspaper was banned from distributing its Tuesday edition which carried reports covering protests in Khartoum inspired by those in Tunisia and Egypt.

Opposition newspaper Ajrass Al Hurriya and independent Al Sahafa were also stopped from distributing their Monday editions.

Attempts to conduct protests in Sudan have been met by a crackdown from security forces.