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## **Sudan: Amnesty International calls on government to repeal law penalizing women for wearing trousers**

As a Court in Khartoum prepares to resume its trial of Sudanese journalist Lubna Hussein for wearing trousers, Amnesty International called on the Sudanese government to withdraw the charges against her and repeal the law used to justify the flogging of women for wearing clothing deemed to be “indecent”.

“The manner in which this law has been used against women is unacceptable, and the penalty called for by the law – up to 40 lashes – abhorrent,” said Tawanda Hondora, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Africa Programme.

Article 152 of the Sudanese Penal Code 1991 states, in summary, that: “Whoever does in a public place an indecent act... or wears an obscene outfit...shall be punished with flogging which may not exceed forty lashes or with fine or with both....”

“The law is crafted in a way that makes it impossible to know what is decent or indecent,” said Tawanda Hondora. “In practice, women are routinely arrested, detained, tried and then, on conviction, flogged simply because a police officer disapproves of their clothing. The law is also discriminatory, in that it is used disproportionately against women.”

In 2003, the African Commission ordered Sudan to amend Article 152 on the grounds that flogging amounted to state-sanctioned torture, after eight women brought a case against the government when they were arrested for publicly picnicking with male friends. The eight were flogged in public using a wire and plastic whip, which reportedly left permanent scars on the women. The government has made no moves to amend the law since the Commission’s decision.

“No one should be flogged. This is cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and flies in the face of international law and common standards of human decency,” said Tawanda Hondora.

### **Note to editors:**

The full text of Article 152 in the Memorandum to Sudanese Penal Code 1991 is:

#### 152 Obscene and Indecent Acts

(1) Whoever does in a public place an indecent act or an act contrary to public morals or wears an obscene outfit or contrary to public morals or causing an annoyance to public feelings shall be punished with flogging which may not exceed forty lashes or with fine or with both.

(2) The act shall be contrary to public morals if it is regarded as such according to the standard of the person's religion or the custom of the country where the act takes place.