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SUDAN: FEARS FOR SAFETY OF PRISONERS IN SECURITY CLAMPDOWN

Following the arrest of scores of government opponents in a widespread security clampdown after four days of violent street demonstrations in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, Amnesty International is calling on the Sudanese authorities to ensure the physical safety of all political prisoners.

"We are deeply concerned that some of the prisoners have been tortured, following reports of severe beatings by security officials," Amnesty International said today. "Some of those arrested are prisoners of conscience and should be released immediately."

At least five people are reported to have been killed in fighting between government supporters -- some reportedly armed -- and protesters, many of them students. Police and plainclothes security men opened fire with live ammunition and tear gas.

In one incident, which appears to be an extrajudicial execution, gunmen in plainclothes are reported to have entered the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Khartoum, singled out three students and shot them dead.

The authorities, who have accused leftists, communists and "foreigners" of being responsible for the demonstrations, began to search for the alleged ring-leaders on Tuesday 12 September.

Amnesty International has received several independent reports alleging fierce beatings by security officials. An intermediate school student arrested on 12 September is reported to have been beaten in incommunicado detention before being dumped from a vehicle outside his home two days later. A day later, another young man was reported to have been briefly held by security men who broke both his arms before setting him free.

Not all those arrested have played a role in the rioting. Under the cover of events on the streets, the authorities also appear to be rounding up prominent opponents known for their non-violent opposition, such as the lawyers Mustapha Abdel Gadir and Mohamed Ali al-Sayid who were arrested on 12 September.

The demonstrations, which are reported to have spread to other major northern Sudanese cities, appear to have been sparked off by the arrest on 2 September of 23 students and others -- who the authorities claim to have been communist plotters -- in an Omdurman suburb.

These arrests took place within days of the government announcing the release of all political detainees in an apparent attempt to convince critics that decisive steps were being taken to improve the situation of human rights.

Amnesty International, which during 1995 has mounted an international campaign to expose the violation of human rights in Sudan, is calling on the authorities to protect all prisoners

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from torture and to release political detainees unless they are to be promptly and fairly tried on recognisably criminal charges.

The organization is also calling for immediate investigations into reports of deliberate and arbitrary killings and beating by security officials.

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