

Sudan

Sudan continued to be the stage of extensive human rights abuses as a result of the spread of armed conflicts and the Bashir regime's systematic repression of its opponents, which continued even after the independence of South Sudan. In the referendum of self-determination in early 2011, the overwhelming majority of Sudanese from the south chose secession and the establishment of an independent state, confirming the failure of the Sudan government to make unity attractive to southerners. Although the Sudanese government abided by the outcome of the referendum, negotiations between Khartoum and the government of South Sudan failed to resolve several outstanding issues, especially concerning disputed border areas. This led to the eruption of newly armed conflicts in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile states, even as the Sudanese government continues its armed conflict in the province of Darfur. It was reported that more than 350,000 residents of conflict areas were displaced, while government armed forces and pro-Khartoum militias committed abuses potentially amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, particularly in South Kordofan. These crimes included shelling civilian-inhabited areas and refugee camps as well as extrajudicial executions of persons suspected of being associated with the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-North). Several churches were burned, destroyed, and looted, women were raped, and the Khartoum authorities blocked relief supplies and prohibited international institutions from entering South Kordofan.

This year witnessed an increase in the use of excessive force to suppress peaceful protests, particularly those inspired by popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. These crackdowns were accompanied by increased arrests, torture, and physical attacks and even included sexual assaults on female political and rights activists. The year 2011 also witnessed extensive attacks on freedom of expression and the press. Journalists were arrested, detained, and attacked, and several newspapers were prohibited from distribution while others were confiscated or shut down. Harassment of opposition figures continued, and clashes escalated with members of the SPLM-North, which is seen as being loyal to or an extension of the SPLM, now the ruling party in independent South Sudan. Human rights defenders also continued to be targeted for detention and prosecution on numerous occasions.

Suppression of Political Protest and Peaceful Gatherings:

The authorities increasingly used force to crush peaceful political protest. Starting on January 30, 2011, thousands of Sudanese students and their supporters rallied in the capital and several other northern cities, inspired by the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. Among their chief demands were an end to the rule of the National Congress Party (NCP) and revocation of price hikes imposed by the government. During these protests, more than 100 people were arrested, among them 9 journalists; some of the arrested protestors were beaten and subjected to ill treatment and/or torture; one student died from his wounds. 80 of those arrested were released hours after their arrest.¹ On February 10, security forces repressed a demonstration by mothers and families of detainees, and some of the demonstrating women were abducted. They were later released in various locations.² In subsequent marches in February and March, female demonstrators were beaten, cursed, and sexually harassed, and their signs confiscated.³

On February 28, security forces surrounded the headquarters of the Popular Congress Party (PCP), where families of detainees were holding a sit-in and a coalition of opposition forces featured the testimony of Safia Ishaq, an activist with the Girifna movement, discussing her abduction and

¹ Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Violent Response to Peaceful Protests," Feb. 3, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/02/03/sudan-violent-response-peaceful-protests>>.

² Sudan Tribune, "Sultat al-amn al-Sudani tulahi q nisa' talabna al-ifraj 'an al-mu'taqilin," Feb. 11, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/A0QkJ>>.

³ Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Protestors Describe Torture by Security Officers," Mar. 4, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/03/04/sudan-protesters-describe-torture-security-officers>>.

rape by members of the Sudanese security apparatus.⁴ On January 20, 2011, security forces forcibly broke up a demonstration calling for the release of opposition leader Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi, who had been detained the previous day. He was to be held for four months on charges of attempting to overthrow the regime. The Sudanese authorities also detained ten members of the PCP led by al-Turabi; they were released in May.⁵

On February 27, 2011, security forces surrounded the offices of the National Elections Commission and prevented opposition forces from holding a protest there. A protest brief was presented to the commission accusing the ruling NCP of violations in preparation for election fraud in South Kordofan.⁶ On March 9, the police brutally crushed a youth demonstration in the capital, throwing some protestors in pick-up trucks and kicking and beating them with batons. Several demonstrators were also detained inside police stations.⁷ On March 21, the authorities took preventive measures to stop several marches which had been called for by Youth for Change (Spark). Those who managed to take to the streets in the provinces of al-Jazirah and Sennar and in some parts of Khartoum were met with violence, and many were arrested.⁸ In February 2011, the authorities imposed restrictions on assemblies of journalists protesting the detention of colleagues and the closure of newspapers. Authorities prevented them from raising any signs stating their demands, and cameras of journalists covering the protest were confiscated.⁹ In May, five people were referred to trial in “Mayo,” a suburb south of Khartoum, after they joined a demonstration demanding the fall of the regime that included supporters of the Sudanese Liberation Movement (MLS) headed by Abdul Wahid Nur. They were charged with working to destroy the regime, opposing the public authorities, and infringing on public safety.¹⁰ In December, the authorities used excessive force to disperse peaceful protests held by students of Khartoum University, using clubs and tear gas; the students were protesting in solidarity with residents of the River Nile province who had been displaced

⁴ Sudan Tribune, “Haraka Sudaniya tad’u li-ihitijajat fi 21 Maris,” Feb. 1, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/6q80k>>.

⁵ Sudan Tribune, “al-Mu’arada al-Sudaniya tatawa’ad bi-isqat al-hukuma wal-shurta taqma’ muzahara,” Jan. 20, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/BZVFp>>.

⁶ Al-Sahafa, “al-Shurta mana’at mawkiban li-l-mu’arada wa-l-sha’biya,” Feb. 28, 2011, <<http://www.alsahafa.sd/details.php?articleid=23087>>.

⁷ Sudan Tribune, “al-Bulis al-Sudani yaqtul qiyadat mu’arida wa yaqma’ muzaharat didd al-nizam,” Mar. 10, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/1UAmA>>.

⁸ Field testimony collected by the researcher.

⁹ Radio Banga, “al-Sahafiyun yatazaharun amam majlis al-sahafa wa-l-sultat al-amniya ta’tadi ‘ala-l-musawwirin,” Feb. 14, 2011, <<http://www.radiodabanga.org/ar/node/9534>>.

¹⁰ Sudan Tribune, “Muhakamat mu’ayyidin li-ra’is harakat tahrir al-Sudan ‘Abd al-Wahid Nur bi-l-Khartum,” May 18, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/R3jKA>>.

by the construction of a dam. The authorities arrested dozens of students. Security forces stormed a student dormitory building on December 22, beating students, and then stormed the Khartoum University campus on December 25; the university was closed on December 29. It was reported that more than 250 people involved in demonstrations were detained from October to December. Bloggers and political activists were also arrested, among them blogger Ali Zein al-Abdin, who was held in solitary confinement for eight days and questioned about his links with the SPLM-North. In addition, a number of members of the opposition PCP were detained, among them the party's secretary-general Ibrahim al-Sanousi.¹¹

Increasing clampdown on the political opposition and on freedom of expression:

The year 2011 saw more violations aiming to restrict freedom of opinion and expression and further suppress critics of the Bashir regime and its policies.

In January and February 2011, the security apparatus surrounded the offices of the newspaper *al-Maidan* and arrested any person who came out. They confiscated the newspaper's archive and copies of the paper awaiting distribution and detained several of the paper's journalists and employees. These measures came after the paper covered popular demonstrations in several Sudanese cities on January 30.¹² The authorities also arrested several journalists, among them Hamza Baloul, a correspondent with the Qatar-based *al-Sharq*, Sara Tag of *al-Sahafa*, Ali Haj al-Amin of *Ajras al-Hurriya*, and Hussein Khogali, the editor-in-chief of *Alwan*. Some websites advocating demonstrations were blocked, and several issues of *al-Sahafa* and *Ajras al-Hurriya* were confiscated.¹³ Around ten journalists were referred to criminal investigations based on complaints filed by the security apparatus, after they declared their solidarity with rights activist Safia Ishaq and demanded an investigation into claims she made via a video recording regarding the torture and rape she endured after being arrested by intelligence personnel. The journalists questioned included Faisal Salih of the paper *al-Akhbar*; Babakr al-Qaray, a writer with *Ajras al-Hurriya*;

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: End Violence against Peaceful Protestors," Jan. 3, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/01/03/sudan-end-violence-against-peaceful-protesters>>.

¹² Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Nizam al-Khartum yaqma' usbu'iyatibi'a li-l-mu'arada wa yuwaqqif 'adadan min muwazzafiha," Feb. 7, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=23626>>.

¹³ Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists Censored, Held in Sudan Protests," Jan. 31, 2011, <<http://en.rsf.org/sudan-journalists-censored-held-in-sudan-31-01-2011,39433.html>>.

Abdullah al-Sheikh, the Editor-in-Chief of *Ajras al-Hurriya*; Saad eldin Ibrahim, the Editor-in-Chief of *al-Jarida*; and Amal Habbani and Fatima Ghazali, journalists with *al-Jarida*.¹⁴

A publication crimes court sentenced journalist Fatima Ghazali to one month in prison after she refused to pay the fine levied by the court following her conviction of publishing false news; she had published a story on the assault on activist Safia Ishaq by security personnel. Saad eldin Ibrahim was fined \$1,670,¹⁵ while Amal Habbani was sentenced to one month in prison after she also refused to pay the fine demanded by the court.¹⁶ For some two months, copies of *Ajras al-Hurriya* were routinely confiscated. Without citing a reason, the National Security and Intelligence Agency banned the distribution of five issues of the paper between April 6 and June 21.¹⁷ On September 4 and 6, two consecutive issues of *al-Maidan*, the official organ of the Sudanese Communist Party, were also banned.¹⁸ On July 9, the Sudanese Press Council issued a decree suspending six newspapers (*Ajras al-Hurriya*, *Khartoum Monitor*, *Juba Post*, *Sudan Tribune*, *The Advocate*, and *The Democrat*)¹⁹ because some of the owners and publishers are southerners, who, following secession, became foreigners in the country and are thus prohibited from owning or publishing newspapers under Article 28 of the press law, which requires newspaper owners and publishers to be Sudanese nationals.

On September 27, the Sudanese authorities shut down the independent daily *al-Jarida* and confiscated its property without citing a reason. *Al-Jarida* had been banned from publishing from August 20 to 22, and its September 4th issue was confiscated. The authorities also banned *al-Maidan* and *al-Sahafa* on September 8. This offensive came during a media

¹⁴ Reporters Without Borders, “al-Tankil bi-’asharat sahafiyin bi-sabab maqalat tafdah intihakak huquq al-insan,” June 18, 2011, <http://arabia.reporters-sans-frontieres.org/article.php3?id_article=32051>.

¹⁵ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “al-Sudan: al-shabaka al-’Arabiya tastankir habs al-sahafiya al-Sudaniya Fatima Ghazali,” July 17, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=35409>>.

¹⁶ International Freedom of Expression Exchange, “al-Sudan: al-Shabaka al-’Arabiya tastankir habs al-sahafiya al-Sudaniya Amal Habbani,” July 26, 2011, <http://www.ifex.org/sudan/2011/07/26/habani_jailed/ar/>.

¹⁷ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “al-Sudan: istimrar al-tadyiq wa-l-mulahaqat al-qada’iya didd hurriyat al-sahafa,” June 25, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=34199>>.

¹⁸ Sudanyia, “Shabakat sahafiyin li-huquq al-insan/jahr, sijill mukhzi fi-l-i’ tida’ ala hurriyat al-sahafa,” Sep. 8, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/cZGjR>>.

¹⁹ International Freedom of Expression Exchange, “Post-Split, Governments Silencing Voices,” July 13, 2011, <http://www.ifex.org/sudan/2011/07/13/post_split_media_problems/>.

campaign in which the government accused opposition parties and papers of maintaining ties with the SPLM-North. At the same time, the Sudanese authorities attempted to prevent the media from publishing any information about the SPLM-North movement and imposed a media blackout on the abuses taking place in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile province. In this context, Jazeera correspondent Osama Ahmed and journalist Tagwa Ahmed were attacked while covering developments in these regions.²⁰

On October 23, the security apparatus confiscated the newspaper *Alwan* after it came off the press.²¹ The fate of Eritrean journalist Jamal Osman Hamad, the editor-in-chief of the *al-Khartoum* website, remained unknown. He was detained in Khartoum on October 24 and taken to an undisclosed location. Observers fear that he may have been repatriated, which may put him at risk of persecution due to his repeated criticism of the situation in Eritrea. He was detained less than a week after the Eritrean president visited Sudan and 300 Eritrean nationals were deported to Eritrea, without their cases being referred to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.²² In August, the authorities released Jaafar Alsabki, a journalist with *al-Sahafa*, after he spent more than ten months in detention on charges of spying and showing hatred of the state, after he sent news stories to Radio Dabanga, which broadcasts from the Netherlands.²³ Also in August, well-known journalist Abuzar Ali al-Amin, the Deputy Editor of the journal *Sawt al-Shaab*, was released after being detained in May 2010. He was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of spying, incitement against the government, undermining the constitutional system, and promoting sectarian hatred. Even though the Supreme Court reduced his sentence to one year in May 2011, he continued to be held after completing his sentence because the security apparatus filed new complaints against him, alleging that he attacked a security officer during his detention. No investigation was conducted into the

²⁰ Reporters Without Borders, "A Newspaper Closed, Others Suspended or Seized, Journalists Physically Attacked," Sep. 29, 2011, <<http://en.rsf.org/sudan-a-newspaper-closed-others-29-09-2011,41081.html>>.

²¹ BBC Arabic, "Ittihad al-sultat al-Sudaniya bi-waqf sahifat alwan wa musadarat mumtalakatiha," Jan. 13, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2012/01/120113_sudan_censorship_alwan.shtml>.

²² International Freedom of Expression Exchange, "Detained Eritrean Journalist Faces Possible Forced Repatriation," Oct. 27, 2011, <http://www.ifex.org/sudan/2011/10/27/hamad_incommunicado/>.

²³ Al-Sahafa, "al-Sabki taliqan," Aug. 29, 2011, <<http://www.alsahafa.sd/details.php?articleid=33318>>.

complaints of torture filed by al-Amin during his detention, as the authorities sufficed by simply denying the allegations.²⁴

Meanwhile, the authorities also targeted opposition party members and others. In the first three weeks of September 2011, the authorities detained more than 500 opposition figures and those believed to be supporters of the SPLM-North. Many were detained for several days and released only after signing affidavits renouncing their party affiliations. Several offices belonging to the movement in various Sudanese cities, including in Darfur, were also closed. It is important to note that in July, the government had announced a ban on 17 political parties, among them the SPLM-North, based on their alleged ties to “foreign entities,” an allusion to the newly independent South Sudan.²⁵ On October 13, Farouk Abu ‘Eissa, the chair of the Alliance of Opposition Forces, was detained in a political security office in Khartoum before being released.²⁶

Continued torture and ill treatment of prisoners and detainees:

Reports confirm the continued use of torture and sexual assault against persons detained by the National Security apparatus. Students and young people detained during protests in January and February were subjected to various abuses, such as beatings, electroshocks, sleep deprivation, and various forms of physical and psychological assault, including threats of death and rape. According to the testimony of detainee Youssef al-Mahdi, he was blindfolded, forced to kneel facing a wall, and then brutally beaten with iron rods, clubs, and whips. He heard screams of intense pain coming from other detainees in the building in which he was held. He said that he observed some detainees crawling, as they were unable to walk due to the assaults they endured. According to the student Mohammed Osman, who was detained on February 14, 2011, he was blindfolded, interrogated, and

²⁴ Hurriyat Sudan, “Ba’d tankil wa ta’ dhib itlaq sarah al-sahafi Abu Dhar ‘Ali al-Amin bi-l-diman al-shakhsi,” Aug. 23, 2011, <<http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=33358>>; Reporters Without Borders, “Two Weeks Ahead of Release, Jailed Editor Suddenly Facing Possible Death Penalty or Life Imprisonment,” June 28, 2011, <<http://en.rsf.org/sudan-two-weeks-ahead-of-release-jailed-28-06-2011,40541.html>>.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Sudan: Political Repression Intensifies,” Sep. 21, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/09/21/sudan-political-repression-intensifies>>.

²⁶ Sudanile, “Itlaq sarah Abu ‘Isa,” Oct. 13, 2011, <www.sudanile.com>.

beaten all over his body with batons and water hoses, then forced to stand throughout the night.²⁷

Sexual violence is also employed against female activists in detention, as is clearly illustrated by the case of activist Safia Ishaq. Security personnel on February 13, 2011 took her to the National Security Agency offices, where they questioned her about her political affiliations. They then beat her until she lost consciousness and raped her. Female members of the PCP also reported being sexually harassed by National Security officials during a peaceful assembly on February 16. Other female activists who were detained reported that they were beaten, cursed, and called whores.²⁸

Human rights defenders under siege:

Attacks continued on human rights organizations and other civil society institutions, and human rights defenders continued to be targets of prosecution and interrogation due to their advocacy work.

Seven human rights defenders were detained for nearly a year after being taken into custody in October and November of 2010 following their broadcast of human rights material on Radio Dabanga. They were charged in June 2011 with conspiracy against the state and espionage. On December 4, the charges against four of them—Zakaria Yacoub, Abdelrahman Gasim, Khalid Ishaq, and Adam al-Nur— were dropped, while the charges against the others—Abdelrahman Adam, Jaafar Ibrahim, and Kawthar Abdel Haqq—were reduced to disturbing public security and publishing lies, which carry a penalty of up to three years in prison.²⁹ On May 6, an armed group of National Security personnel kidnapped social activist Hawa Abdullah from the Abu Shouk refugee camp in northern Darfur. Government newspapers reported that the activist, a member of the joint UN-AU peacekeeping mission (UNAMID), was proselytizing Christianity to children in the camps.³⁰ Rights activist Bushra Gammar was still detained at the end of the year after being arrested in Kadugli on June 25 and placed in Kober

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Sudan: Protestors Describe Torture by Security Officers,” Mar. 4, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/03/04/sudan-protesters-describe-torture-security-officers>>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Front Line Defenders, “Sudan: Update—Four Human Rights Defenders Acquitted and Charges against Three Others Downgraded,” Dec. 14, 2011, <<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/16905>>.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Sudan: Free Female Activist,” May 11, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/11/sudan-free-female-activist>>.

Prison.³¹ Gammar worked with the Sudanese Development Organization in Nyala before establishing a human rights and development organization in the Nubian mountains area. The authorities detained several human rights defenders following the peaceful sit-in called for by the No to Oppression of Women initiative and launched on International Women's Day to protest the failure of the authorities to investigate the rape of Safia Ishaq, an activist with Girifna, by security personnel.³² In addition, many writers, journalists, activists, and rights workers were questioned, detained, and prosecuted after demonstrating solidarity with Ishaq. Among those summoned for questioning were al-Baqiq al-Afif, Abd al-Moneim al-Jak, and Omar al-Qaray of the al-Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Development.³³

Expanded armed conflicts and further violations of international humanitarian law:

Despite the formal declaration of an independent South Sudan on July 9, 2011, constructive relations between north and south are threatened by problems which include determining the shared borders of the two countries, especially in the disputed Abyei area, as well as establishing permanent arrangements to settle issues of citizenship, nationality, and the division of oil revenues.³⁴ As a result of failed negotiations over these issues, tensions and armed conflicts are increasing in sensitive border areas.

Khartoum's armed forces launched an air and land offensive on Abyei in May, which lasted more than three weeks, left thousands homeless, and was accompanied by acts of looting and arson. The operation came as a response to attacks by southern forces, which reflects both parties' desire to reinforce their control over the Abyei area by force.³⁵

On May 20, the Sudanese government, represented by the NCP, and the SPLM, which has become the ruling party in South Sudan, signed a transitional agreement for security and administrative arrangements for the

³¹ Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: End Violence against Peaceful Protestors."

³² Hurriyat, Mar. 8. 2011.

³³ Hurriyat Sudan, "Hiwar hurriyat ma' al-batala Safiya Ishaq," May 28, 2011, <<http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=24465>>.

³⁴ International Crisis Group, "Janub al-Sudan: al-'amal al-shaqq yabda' al-an," Feb. 2011, <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/op-eds/Real-Work-Begins-Now-Arabic-Zach.aspx>>.

³⁵ International Crisis Group, "al-Sudan wa hisabat Abyei," June 2011, <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/south-sudan/arabic-vertin-abyei-is-burning.aspx>>.

Abyei region. The agreement, signed in Addis Ababa, mandates the withdrawal of Sudanese forces from Abyei and the deployment of Ethiopian peacekeeping forces. The UN Security Council ratified the deployment of Ethiopian troops under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, but although the troops were deployed, Sudanese troops still had not withdrawn from the area at the time of the writing of this report.³⁶ A few weeks after Khartoum extended military control over Abyei, areas in South Kordofan became the stage of wide-ranging abuses by Sudanese armed forces. The conflict between government forces and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in this area began on June 5, with reports of Sudanese forces shelling civilian areas and looting homes and churches. There were also reports of extrajudicial killings targeting citizens suspected of ties to the SPLM. These acts took place as soldiers and pro-Khartoum militias were searching homes in the city of Kadugli. Clerics stated that soldiers and militia members looted four churches and the Sudanese Council of Churches in Kadugli, while eyewitnesses told rights organizations that Sudanese government soldiers committed acts of rape. The almost daily shelling forced thousands of civilians to flee, bringing the number of displaced persons to more than 150,000. Camps for the displaced were also not safe from air strikes, which killed dozens of civilians, most of them women and children. The Sudanese government prevented the entry of humanitarian aid to several areas in South Kordofan, and on August 23, the Sudanese president declared that no foreign agencies would be granted entry to the province of Kordofan.³⁷

Darfur also saw grave abuses. In the first six months of the year, the increased attacks by the government on inhabited areas of Darfur—including air strikes—led to the deaths of dozens of civilians, the destruction of the targeted areas, and the displacement of some 70,000 people, most of them from the Zaghawa and Fur communities. Reports described the difficulty of determining the extent of the humanitarian suffering of the region's population given the restrictions imposed by the Sudanese government on

³⁶ UN Press Center, "Majlis al-amn yushakkil quwa amniya li-hifz al-salam fi mintaqat Abyei fi-l-Sudan," June 27, 2011, <<http://www.un.org/arabic/news/fullstorynews.asp?newsID=15180>>.

³⁷ For more details on abuses in South Kordofan, see Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Southern Kordofan Civilians Tell of Air Strike Horror," Aug. 30, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/30/sudan-southern-kordofan-civilians-tell-air-strike-horror>>; and Human Rights Watch, "UN/Sudan: Southern Kordofan Need International Monitors," July 27, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/27/unsudan-southern-kordofan-needs-international-monitors>>.

entry to most areas of Darfur, hindering the work of both peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid organizations.³⁸

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: As South Split Looms, Abuses Grow in Darfur," June 6, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/06/06/sudan-south-split-looms-abuses-grow-darfur>>.

