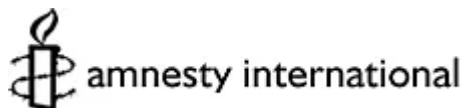


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Amnesty International Report 2016/17 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Sudan

The authorities refused to execute arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states remained dire, with widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Evidence pointed to the use of chemical weapons by government forces in Darfur. The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were arbitrarily restricted and critics and suspected opponents of the government were subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention and other violations. Excessive use of force by the authorities in dispersing gatherings led to numerous casualties.

Background

Armed conflicts persisted in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, leading to civilian casualties and widespread disruption and hardship.

In March, the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) proposed a Roadmap Agreement for peace and dialogue to end the conflicts. The Agreement commits parties to end conflicts in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan and ensure humanitarian access to all populations in these areas. It also commits parties to engage in an inclusive national dialogue process. The government signed the Agreement in March but opposition groups refused at first to sign.

On 8 August, the agreement was signed by four opposition groups: the National Umma Party; the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N); the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM); and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM-MM) led by Minni Minnawi. The following day, negotiations resumed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, along two tracks: between the SPLM-N and the government; and on Darfur around cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access. However, on 14 August, the talks collapsed between the government and the armed opposition groups, the SPLM-N, JEM and SLM-MM. The AUHIP announced an indefinite suspension of the peace talks. Both sides blamed each other for the collapse of the talks.

When Sudan's human rights record was examined under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in May, Sudan accepted a number of recommendations including ratification of the UN Convention against Torture and efforts to prevent torture and inhuman treatment. However, Sudan rejected recommendations to remove impunity provisions from the National Security Act 2010 and ensure independent investigation and prosecution of crimes under international law and human rights violations committed by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), the armed forces and the police.¹

In January, Parliament passed an amendment that increased the maximum penalty for rioting from two to five years' imprisonment.

International Criminal Court

The authorities continued to refuse to execute five arrest warrants issued by the ICC for Sudanese nationals, including two warrants for President al-Bashir on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed in Darfur.

Armed conflict

Darfur

The security and humanitarian situation in Darfur remained dire, as the armed conflict entered its thirteenth year in 2016.

In January, government forces launched a large-scale military campaign in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur. Co-ordinated ground and air attacks targeted locations throughout Jebel Marra until May. After that, the seasonal rains intensified, making ground attacks impractical throughout most of the area; air operations continued, however, through to mid-September.

A large number of crimes under international law and human rights violations committed by Sudanese government forces were documented, including the bombing of civilians and civilian property, the unlawful killing of men, women and children, the abduction and rape of women, the forced displacement of civilians and the looting and destruction of civilian property, including the destruction of entire villages.

Evidence was also documented that suggested the Sudanese government forces repeatedly used chemical weapons during attacks in Jebel Marra.² Satellite imagery, more than 200 in-depth interviews with survivors and expert analysis of dozens of images of injuries indicated that at least 30 probable chemical attacks took place in Jebel Marra between January and September 2016. An estimated 200 to 250 people may have died as a result of exposure to chemical weapons agents, with many – or most – being children. Most survivors of the suspected chemical weapons attacks had no access to adequate medical care.

South Kordofan and Blue Nile

On 24 April, the Sudan Revolutionary Front, a coalition of four armed opposition groups, announced a unilateral ceasefire of six months, extending a previous ceasefire announced in October 2015. On 17 June, President al-Bashir declared a four-month unilateral cessation of hostilities in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. In October, he extended the cessation of hostilities in these areas to the end of year.

Despite the declared cessation of hostilities, government forces and the SPLM-N engaged in sporadic military attacks in Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N) controlled areas. The armed conflict was characterized by aerial and ground attacks by government forces, many directed at civilian objects – that is, objects which are not military objectives – as well as denial of humanitarian access to civilians.³

Freedom of association

Civil society activists were subjected to arbitrary arrests and arbitrary restrictions on their activities.

On 28 January, the NISS stopped a seminar organized at Al Mahas Club in the capital Khartoum by a committee opposed to the building of the Kajbar and Dal dams in Northern Sudan state. The committee claimed the dams would have a damaging social and environmental impact. The NISS detained 12 people before releasing them later that day.

The NISS raided the office of the NGO TRACKS (Khartoum Centre for Training and Human Development) on 29 February and confiscated mobile phones and laptops, as well as documents, the passports of those present and two vehicles. They detained the Director of TRACKS, Khalafalla Mukhtar, for six hours, along with another TRACKS employee and Mustafa Adam, a visitor and Director of Al Zarqaa, another civil society organization.⁴ On 22 May, the NISS arrested eight TRACKS employees and affiliates. Five were released on bail in June, but three were detained without charge for nearly three months by the Office of the Prosecutor for State Security before being transferred to Al Huda Prison to await trial.⁵ In August, a total of six TRACKS employees and affiliates were charged with various offences including crimes against the state that carry the death penalty. The trial had not concluded by the end of the year.⁶

Between 23 and 28 March, four civil society representatives were intercepted by security officials at Khartoum International Airport while on their way to a high-level meeting with diplomats in Geneva, Switzerland, in preparation for Sudan's examination under the UPR process.⁷

The authorities continued to prevent opposition political parties from organizing peaceful public activities. The NISS prevented the Republican Party from marking the anniversary of the execution of its founder, Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, on 18 January. In February, NISS agents prevented two opposition political parties – the Sudanese Communist Party and Sudanese Congress Party – from holding a public event in Khartoum.

Freedom of expression

Arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression continued. The authorities regularly confiscated newspaper print runs. During 2016, 12 newspapers had their issues confiscated on 22 different occasions. Dozens of journalists were arrested and interrogated by the NISS Media Office and the Press and the Publications Prosecution Office in Khartoum.

In April, the NISS confiscated the daily newspapers *Akhir Lahzah*, *Al Sihaa* and *Al-Tagheer*, without giving reasons. In May, *Alwan*, *Al-Mustagilla* and *Al-Jareeda* newspapers were confiscated by the NISS from the printers. In October, *Al Sihaa* and *Al-Jareeda* newspapers were confiscated.

On 14 August, the National Council for Press and Publications suspended indefinitely the publication of four newspapers: *Elaf*, *Al-Mustagilla*, *Al Watan* and *Awal Al Nahar*. The Council said it had suspended the newspapers because of their continued violation of the regulations in the Press and Publications Act.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

Across Sudan, NISS officials and members of other security forces targeted opposition political party members, human rights defenders, students and political activists for arbitrary arrest, detention and other violations.

On 1 February, NISS officials arrested four students from Darfur in Khartoum after a protest organized by the United Popular Front, affiliated with the Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdul Wahid Al Nour, against the conflict in Jebel Marra.

In April, violent confrontations between students and security agents went on for three weeks at the University of Khartoum. The protests erupted because of reports that the government was planning to sell some of the university's buildings. Dozens of students were arrested during these protests, including five who were detained without charge in Khartoum.⁸ They were released in late April, but some were rearrested in May.

NISS agents raided the office of a prominent human rights lawyer, Nabil Adib, in Khartoum on 5 May and arrested 11 people, including eight students who had been expelled or suspended from the University of Khartoum. All were released by late June.

In Central Darfur state, on 31 July, NISS agents arrested 10 people who had attended a meeting with the US Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan during his visit to the region. Of the 10, seven were internally displaced persons. They were all released in September.⁹

Excessive use of force

The authorities arbitrarily restricted freedom of assembly and, on many occasions, used excessive force to disperse gatherings, resulting in several deaths and numerous injuries. No investigations were conducted into the deaths.

In February, NISS officials and students affiliated to the ruling National Congress Party violently disrupted a public seminar organized by a political opposition party at the University of El Geneina. A number of students were seriously injured, and one, Salah al Din Qamar Ibrahim, died as a result of his injuries.

On 19 April, Abubakar Hassan Mohamed Taha, an 18-year-old student at the University of Kordofan, was shot in the head by NISS agents in Al Obied, capital of North Kordofan state. The students had been marching peacefully when heavily armed NISS agents intercepted them, reportedly shooting into the crowd, in an attempt to prevent them from taking part in student union elections. Another 27 students were injured, five of them seriously. The killing of Abubakar Hassan Mohamed Taha provoked nationwide student protests.¹⁰

On 27 April, 20-year-old Mohamad Al Sadiq Yoyo, a second-year student at the Omdurman Al Ahlia University in Khartoum state, was shot dead by NISS agents.

On 8 May, police forces in Kosti city in White Nile state violently dispersed a peaceful sit-in organized by the Faculty of Engineering Students' Association of the University of Al-Imam Al-Mahdi. The police reportedly used tear gas and batons, injuring about seven students, four of them seriously.

1. Sudan: Amnesty International public statement at the 33rd session of the UN Human Rights Council ([AFR 54/4875/2016](#))
2. Sudan: Scorched earth, poisoned air – Sudanese government forces ravage Jebel Marra, Darfur ([AFR 54/4877/2016](#))
3. Sudan: Five years and counting – Intensified aerial bombardment, ground offensive and humanitarian crisis in South Kordofan state ([AFR 54/4913/2016](#))
4. Sudan: Ten civil society activists harassed by NISS ([AFR 54/3634/2016](#))
5. Sudan: Further information – three human rights defenders still detained ([AFR 54/4267/2016](#))
6. Sudan: Drop all charges and release activists detained for exercising their rights ([News story](#), 29 August)
7. Sudan blocks civil society participation in UN-led human rights review ([AFR 54/4310/2016](#))
8. Sudan: Student activists detained without charge ([AFR 54/3861/2016](#))
9. Sudan: Eight arrested, whereabouts unknown ([AFR 54/4617/2016](#))
10. Sudan: Government must investigate brutal killing of 18-year-old university student by intelligence agents ([News story](#), 20 April)

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