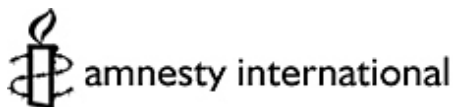


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Sudan must end violent crackdown on protestors

Amnesty International has strongly condemned a violent crackdown by Sudanese security forces on political protests in Khartoum on Monday.

The organisation also received reports of those arrested being tortured in detention. More than 200 people, including opposition leaders and human rights activists, were arrested as they gathered in front of the parliament building this morning.

"This is yet another example of the culture of violence that the Sudanese government has adopted," said Tawanda Hondora, deputy director of the Africa programme at Amnesty International.

"We ask the government to immediately announce the names and whereabouts of those arrested and to charge them with recognized criminal offences or else secure their immediate release."

"This widespread use of violence and torture against opposition and human rights activists as well as ordinary civilians must stop now'.

"The government should respect their right to peacefully assemble and express their views. This is a crucial time for Sudan and all parties should abstain from using violence, especially in the light of the coming elections and referendum."

The demonstrators gathered in front of the parliament building in the early morning despite a last minute ban being imposed by the authorities.

The protest was aimed against the delays in passing laws that are seen as vital to a forthcoming referendum and elections.

Next year's vote will be the first presidential, parliamentary and local elections in 24 years.

A referendum is also scheduled on whether the south should secede in 2011. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement ended 22 years of war during which 1,5 million people have been killed.

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