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Attacks on the Press in 2011 - Sudan

Key Developments

- Vast censorship practiced. Newspapers are confiscated, publishing licenses are pulled.
- Authorities charge, detain journalists to suppress human rights coverage.

Sudan continued to impose extensive censorship by confiscating newspapers and shutting news outlets, and it maintained a hostile atmosphere through the frequent use of harassment and detention. Numerous press freedom violations were reported in the run-up to the January referendum that led to independence for South Sudan. On the eve of South Sudan's independence in July, the state-run National Council for Press and Publications announced the withdrawal of licenses for six newspapers partly owned by South Sudanese citizens that had run commentary critical of the Khartoum government. In September, the council ordered the suspension of another six sports-oriented publications for allegedly "inciting violence between teams." In June, authorities filed politicized criminal defamation charges against several journalists who covered the alleged rape and torture of a youth activist. After the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, President Omar al-Bashir announced that he would pardon all imprisoned journalists. Jafaar al-Subki Ibrahim, a reporter for the private daily *Al-Sahafa* who had been held incommunicado and without charge since November 2010, was released after the announcement. But no formal pardon was ever issued, and four journalists were still in detention in late year. In September alone, the National Intelligence and Security Services blocked the distribution of four opposition newspapers without cause.

[Refworld note: The sections that follow represent a best effort to transcribe onto a single page information that appears in tabs on the CPJ's own pages, which also include a number of graphics not readily reproducible here. Refworld researchers are therefore strongly recommended to check against the original report: [Attacks on the Press in 2011.](#)]

Imprisoned on December 1, 2011: 4

Abdelrahman Adam Abdelrahman, Adam al-Nur Adam, and Zakaria Yacoub Eshag, all journalists with Netherlands-based Radio Dabanga, were being held on antistate charges. Dabanga is outlawed in Sudan because of its coverage of Darfur and human rights, highly sensitive topics for the government. The station uses shortwave frequencies to transmit its signal into Sudan. A fourth journalist, exiled Eritrean writer Jamal Osman Hamad, was also in custody.

Imprisonments on CPJ's annual December 1 survey:

Newspaper confiscations: 19

Sudanese authorities censored opposition newspapers by seizing their press runs, CPJ research shows. Seven publications were targeted, some on multiple occasions.

Targeted newspapers:

Al-Midan

Al-Jarida

Al-Sahafa

Akhbar al-Youm

Al-Ahdath

Ajras al-Huriya

Sawt Barout

Revenue lost from confiscations: \$10,000

Al-Jarida, an opposition newspaper, said it lost at least US\$10,000 in revenue when its August 20, 21, and 22 editions were confiscated by authorities, according to the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies.

Two papers under fire:

4 Confiscations:

Al-Jarida was confiscated a fourth time, in September, CPJ research shows.

5 Seizures:

Al-Midan, a thrice-weekly opposition paper, was seized five times in September.

Charged for rape coverage: 10

Charges were pending in late year against journalists who covered the alleged rape and torture of Safiya Ishag, a democracy youth activist detained after her participation in a January 30 demonstration, CPJ research shows. Some journalists faced multiple charges.

Editors targeted:

7: Defamation complaints against *Ajras al-Huriya* Editor Abdullah Shaikh in connection with a piece headlined, "Rape ... under Sharia Law." Multiple state agencies filed duplicative claims.

6: Defamation complaints against Fayez al-Silaik, former editor of *Ajras al-Huriya*. Multiple state agencies filed duplicative claims.

Phone lines per 100 inhabitants: 0.86

Sudan has the region's lowest rate of telecommunication access, which includes fixed telephone lines, Internet subscriptions, and Internet penetration, according to the International Telecommunication Union, or ITU. The rate illustrated the extreme difficulties journalists faced in gathering and disseminating information.

Regional ranking, from lowest, according to the ITU:

1: Sudan

2: Mauritania

3: Yemen

4: Iraq

5: Algeria