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Republic of the Sudan

Head of state and government: **Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir**

Security forces targeted opposition party members, human rights defenders, students and political activists for arbitrary arrest, detention and other abuses. The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were arbitrarily restricted. 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.

BACKGROUND

In January, the US government partially lifted economic sanctions imposed on Sudan since 1997, which included unfreezing assets and banking, commercial and investment transactions. The US government agreed to lift all economic sanctions in October, stating that Sudan's government demonstrated its commitment to achieving progress in five key areas including: a marked reduction in offensive military activity culminating in a pledge to maintain a cessation of hostilities in conflict areas in Sudan; and improved humanitarian access throughout Sudan.

On 15 January, the Council of Ministers extended the unilateral ceasefire in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan for a further six months. The Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) exchanged accusations over ceasefire violations in South Kordofan State on 21 February. In March, the SPLM-N split into two rival factions which threatened to delay peace talks between the government and the SPLM-N, trigger wider conflict and cause additional displacement in SPLM-N-controlled areas in Blue Nile. However, in October the government extended the unilateral ceasefire to 31 December which held at the end of the year.

FREEDOMS OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The activities of civil society organizations and political opposition parties were extensively restricted. The National Intelligence Security Service (NISS) prevented many civil society organizations and opposition parties from holding events. For example, on 17 February it banned a meeting of the Teachers Central Committee at the Umma National Party offices in Omdurman city. It prohibited the Umma National Party from holding a public meeting in Wad Madani in Al Jazeera State on 18 March. In April, it prevented the committee for the Sudanese Dramatists from holding a public event to address the impact on Sudanese society of an absence of dramatic arts. Also in April, it stopped the opposition Sudan Congress Party holding a memorial service for one of its members; and an event organized by the "No to women's oppression" initiative at Al-Ahfad University without providing a reason. In May, the NISS cancelled a symposium on Sufism entitled "Current and Future Prospects" at the Friendship Hall in the capital, Khartoum. In June, the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) suspended the activities of Shari Al-Hawadith, an organization providing medical support in Kassala State.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In the second half of the year, authorities confiscated print-runs belonging to six newspapers on 26 occasions. Restrictions on freedom of expression continued with newspaper editors and journalists regularly instructed not to cover any subjects considered a security threat. Twelve journalists were repeatedly summoned and investigated by the NISS, and two others were convicted for reporting on issues said to be a threat to security. For example, in May, the Press and Publications Court in Khartoum convicted Madiha Abdala, former Editor of Sudanese Communist Party newspaper *Al-Midan*, of "dissemination of false information" and fined her 10,000 Sudanese pounds (around USD1,497), for publishing an article on the conflict in South Kordofan in 2015.

In September, Hanadi Alsiddig, Editor-in-Chief of *Akhbar Alwatan* newspaper, was briefly arrested and beaten by NISS for covering land dispute issues.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

NISS officials and other security forces targeted opposition political party members, human rights defenders, students and political activists for arbitrary arrest, detention and other abuses.[1] Three political opposition activists were held in detention without charge following their arrests in January and February by the NISS in Khartoum, and were released at the end of April. They were arrested because they supported the civil disobedience protests in November and December 2016 against economic austerity measures.[2]

Dr Hassan Karar, former chairperson of the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors (CCSD), was rearrested on 20 April and detained for four days at the office of the NISS Prosecutor of Crimes Against the State. He was held for his role in supporting a nationwide doctors' strike to protest against the deteriorating health service. Dr Mohamed Yasin Abdalla, also a former chairperson of the CCSD, was arrested and detained on 22 April in Khartoum at the office of the Prosecutor of Crimes Against the State. He was released without charge on 28 April. Both were accused of, but not formally charged with, forming an illegal entity and threatening the health system of the country.

In May, activists Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam and his colleague Hafiz Idris Eldoma were charged with six offences, two of which are punishable by life imprisonment or death.[3] They were arrested by the NISS along with a third activist in 2016 in connection with their work for the Sudan Social Development Organization-UK (SUDO-UK) which works on humanitarian and development projects across the country. They were subjected to ill-treatment on arrest. Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam and Hafiz Idris Eldoma were released on 29 August after eight months of wrongful imprisonment.[4]

Nabil Mohamed El-Niwari, a Sudanese political activist and member of the opposition party Sudan Congress, was arrested by the NISS in Khartoum on 5 September in connection with his political activities.[5]

ARMED CONFLICT

DARFUR

There was a reduction in armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and opposition armed groups at the beginning of the year. However, there were reports of renewed fighting in North Darfur on 28 May between, on one side, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM-MM), led by Minni Minawi, and the SLM-Transitional Council against, on the other side, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). There was no clear progress in the peace process or mechanisms to address the causes and consequences of the Darfur conflict. There were at least 87 incidents of unlawful killing of civilians, including of internally displaced persons (IDPs), mainly by pro-government militia, and there were reports of widespread looting, rape and arbitrary arrests across Darfur. On 22 September, President al-Bashir announced a visit to Kalma IDP camp in South Darfur. Sudanese security forces used live ammunition to break up protests by IDPs against the visit. Five people were killed and dozens wounded. In June, the UN Security Council renewed the mandate of UNAMID (UN Mission in Darfur) until 30 June 2018. The mandate also included the restructuring of the UNAMID presence into two six-month phases, which had wider implications for the protection of civilians in Darfur.

SOUTH KORDOFAN AND BLUE NILE

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS-NET) reported that the humanitarian situation in SPLM-N-controlled areas in South Kordofan was dire. The rate of chronic malnutrition was estimated at 38.3% due to long-term food deprivation and recurrent illness. FEWS-NET estimated that 39% of households in Blue Nile were severely food insecure. Meanwhile, the simmering leadership dispute within SPLM-N heightened tension among Sudanese refugees in Maban County in South Sudan and triggered violent ethnic clashes between the two rival SPLM-N factions in Blue Nile, resulting in the displacement of thousands of people from the SPLM-N-controlled area to government-controlled areas in Sudan, and to refugee camps in South Sudan and Ethiopia.

[1] Courageous and resilient: Activists in Sudan speak out ([AFR 54/7124/2017](#))

[2] Opposition activists arbitrarily held in Sudan ([AFR 54/6000/2017](#))

[3] Sudan: Human rights defender facing death penalty: Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam ([AFR 54/6300/2017](#))

[4] Sudan: Dr Mudawi released after eight months of wrongful imprisonment ([Press Release](#), 30 August)

[5] Sudan: Detained opposition activist denied lawyer visits: Nabil Mohamed El-Niwari ([AFR 54/7101/2017](#))

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