Sudan: Killing of peaceful protesters and a wave of arbitrary arrests and detention by Sudanese authorities, 14-24 December 2018

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African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies

<http://www.acjps.org/sudan-killing-of-peaceful-protesters-and-a-wave-of-arbitrary-arrests-and-detention-by-sudanese-authorities-14-24-december-2018/>

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies is deeply concerned about the policing of anti-austerity protests including the use of excessive forces resulting in the death of several peaceful protestors. The Government of Sudan has responded to widespread disgruntlement over recent austerity measures by arresting and detaining opposition political party members, human rights defenders, activists, journalists, students and other individuals, censoring newspapers through prohibiting publication of information on protests and confiscation of daily- print runs prior to distribution, use of force including firing live ammunition resulting into deaths and injury of peaceful protestors. The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) received reliable information of the killing of at least 13 individuals, injuring of 50 individuals and the arrest and detention of 80 individuals, including opposition political party leaders, students, advocates, doctors, journalists and human rights activists for their participation or suspected involvement in the protests.

The Government’s response to the growing public unrest as a result of the recent austerity measures violates numerous rights including the right to freedom of assembly, association and expression, right to personal liberty, prohibition against torture and ill-treatment, among others, guaranteed in Sudan’s Interim National Constitution, 2005. [This is the second time in 2018 that protests have broken out following the announcement of austerity measures](http://www.acjps.org/open-letter-concerning-the-crackdown-on-peaceful-protests-and-the-wave-of-arbitrary-arrests-and-continued-incommunicado-detentions-by-sudanese-government-forces/).

The policing of assemblies must respect human rights and must be carried out in accordance with international standards, which prohibit the use of force unless strictly necessary and proportionate. Sudanese authorities should ensure that police and other security services responsible for policing demonstrations or performing other law enforcement duties comply with international standards on the use of force. It should be made clear that arbitrary or abusive use of force by security forces will be punished as a criminal offence. ACJPS urges the Government of Sudan to ensure accountability for excessive use of force against protesters, which caused civilian deaths during crackdowns.

ACJPS is further concerned about the physical and psychological well-being of the individuals who remain in detention, including those held incommunicado and are at risk of torture. We urge the Government of Sudan to guarantee the physical safety of those in custody, grant the detainees immediate and unequivocal access to their lawyers and family members, and release them in the absence of valid legal charges consistent with international standards. If such charges exist, the detainees should be brought promptly before an impartial, independent and competent tribunal and guarantee their procedural rights at all times. We further urge the Government to release those in detention, in absence of valid legal charges that are consistent with international standards, and grant those in detention access to courts to challenge their detention.

ACJPS calls to the Government of Sudan to immediately end its policies of pre- and post- print censorship of newspapers, which severely circumscribes the availability of information in the public sphere and hinders freedom of expression and access to information.

**Background**

Economic situation:

Since 2017, there has been a continuous deterioration in the economic situation in Sudan leading to the decline in value of the Sudanese Pound. The exchange rate for the US Dollar to the Sudanese pound had risen to 60 Sudanese Pounds, resulting in increased costs of living and the prices of basic commodities. There has also been scarcity of hard cash in the banks, making it difficult for citizens to withdraw necessary amounts needed to meet the costs of purchasing the necessary commodities.

In June 2017, the US Government lifted the economic sanctions against Sudan. At the time, the market value of the US Dollar to the Sudanese Pound was 15 Pounds. 3 days after the lifting of the sanctions, the value of the Sudanese pound rose to 17 Pounds. By September 2018, the Pound had gone beyond 40 Pounds.

Sudan has also suffered a number of fuel shortages with citizens queuing at the petrol stations on several occasions. Citizens have also had to queue in front of confectionaries and bread shops. There have been long queues at ATM machines. These scenes have occurred in various cities and towns across Sudan.  In September 2018, the Sudanese Central Bank introduced two new currency notes for 100 and 500 Sudanese pounds but this did not result increase of money in circulation.

Numerous private factories and business involved in either food production or other basic commodities closed down without prior notice. This resulted in a shortage of supply of basic commodities as well as unemployment of former employees. Several facilities, service centres, companies, etc. have preferred to transact in cash and started to reject bank cheques. This has also been taken on by medical facilities making it difficult to receive treatment for those without cash.

The lack of cash flow led public distrust in the banking system that has preferred to keep cash out of the banks or transact on the black market. On the market, the exchange rate of the US Dollar to the Sudanese Pound is 6 Sudanese Pounds if transacting with cash and 8 Sudanese pounds if transacting by bank cheque.

In November 2018, the Sudanese Judiciary issued a decree restricting the selling of land and cars to be conducted via cheque instead of cash. Such a declaration is against the law and indicates an economic policy intended to force people to engage with the struggling banking system. This policy has also left many investors and businessmen wondering about the fate of their money.

Political situation:

In February 2018, following [the reappointment of Mr. Salah Mohamed Abdalla (Salah Gosh](http://www.acjps.org/urgent-concern-for-individuals-detained-in-unknown-locations-and-dozens-still-in-detention-amidst-release-of-sudan-2018-detainees/)), as the Director of the Sudan National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), the general political arena witnessed several changes that can be directly related to the conflicts and disagreement between President Omar Al Bashir and members within the ruling party National Congress Party (NCP), concerning his candidacy for 2020 elections.

Several NCP members and businessmen affiliated with the NCP were arrested and accused of corruption. There has only been one complete prosecution against Mr. Abdel afar El Sharif, the former head of the political department of NISS. He was prosecuted for abuse of office and illegal gain under the NISS Act and sentenced for 7 years’ imprisonment. He appealed his conviction and his sentence was reduced to 6 years on 9 November 2018. His trial took place before the NISS courts.

State of emergency

Since the beginning of the anti-austerity protests, a number of state governments declared a state of emergency in their jurisdictions. On 20 December, a state of emergency was declared in Atbara, River Nile State and in Karima, Northern State. On 21 December, a state of emergency was announced in Al-Gedarif, Eastern Sudan. On 22 December, an emergency situation was announced in White Nile state.

A state of emergency is in forces in all Darfur states, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states following armed clashes in the region. In 2012, after the incident in Hajleej area, between Sudan and South Sudan, the Government announced a state of emergency in the White Nile state and areas near the South Sudan border. In July 2017, Aljazeera state government announced a state of emergency following armed clashes. 3 months late, the state Governor of North Kordofan declared a state of emergency in order to carry out a weapons collection campaign. That same month Kassala state did the same.