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Sudan: Abolish the flogging of women in Sudan

Amnesty International today published a campaign briefing that denounces the continuous practice of flogging which particularly affects women in Sudan.

Sudanese women face a daily risk of being arbitrarily arrested in public or private places for “indecent or immoral behaviour or dress”. Public Order Police Officers in Sudan have the power to decide what is decent and what is not. In most cases women are arrested for wearing trousers or knee length skirts.

Such behaviour can be punishable by up to 40 lashes according to the Sudanese Criminal Act 1991. Judges have even exceeded the legal limit in some instances and punished women and girls by up to 50 lashes. These punishments amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and affect women as well as girls under 18 in Sudan.

In July 2009, Lubna Hussein, broke the silence around these laws. Lubna, a Sudanese journalist with the UN, was arrested with 12 other women for wearing trousers. She chose to challenge her arrest in court and launch a public campaign calling for the abolishment of article 152 of the 1991 Criminal Act.

In the lead up to International Women’s Day, Amnesty International is calling on the Sudanese government to abolish Article 152 as the law is vaguely formulated, discriminatory and constitutes a violation on freedom of expression. Amnesty International also calls on the Sudanese government to end the use of flogging as punishment and to provide redress for the victims of this cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Background:

Article 152 is not the only law that discriminates against women in Sudan. The article is part of the broader public order regime that actively restricts the human rights of women and girls. The public order regime includes the Public Order Acts, sections of the 1991 Criminal Act and the associated public order police and courts.

The Campaign briefing is available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR54/005/2010/en>