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## **Sudan escalates mass arrests of activists amid protest crackdown**

Reports that Sudan's security forces have arrested at least 800 activists, members of opposition parties, journalists, and others amid ongoing anti-government protests mark a shocking escalation of the crackdown on dissent, Amnesty International said.

A wave of arrests took place between the night of Monday 30 September and the early hours of Tuesday 1 October. Amnesty International is still receiving reports of arrests at the time of writing.

"Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service is notorious for its repressive tactics in rounding up and placing perceived dissidents behind bars – but even by their standards, this latest round-up marks a significant escalation in arrests," said Lucy Freeman, Africa Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

"We fear that the hundreds of arrested or missing are at grave risk of torture or other forms of ill-treatment. Those detained are being held incommunicado, with no access to lawyers or their families."

The Sudanese Minister of Interior stated in a press release that they have arrested 700 "criminals" in Khartoum and elsewhere since mass protests began on 23 September. But reports from journalists, members of opposition parties, activists, and family members indicate that the figures are much higher.

Some of those who have been detained have been taken from their homes and others from their places of work. Most have reportedly been arrested without a warrant.

Under Sudan's 2010 National Security Act, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) is allowed to detain suspects for up to four and a half months without any form of judicial review.

"All indicators are that people are being targeted for arrest for no other reason than they are members of opposition groups, or activists, lawfully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. If the authorities have evidence to the contrary, they must charge them with a recognizable criminal offence

or else release them immediately. In the meantime, they must be granted immediate access to their families, legal representation and any medical treatment they may require,” said Lucy Freeman.

“The draconian 2010 National Security Act must be scrapped, as it gives the NISS extraordinary powers to detain without charge, in blatant violation of international law.”

### Political opposition

At least 17 members of the Sudanese Communist Party have been arrested in and around Sudan’s capital Khartoum since the protests began.

On 27 September, the NISS arrested Dr Sidgi Kabbalo, a member of the Central Committee of Sudan’s Communist Party, shortly after he returned from the UK. Family members attempted to visit him on 30 September, but were told to return in 15 days. The NISS would not disclose the detained doctor’s whereabouts to his family.

The 64-year-old doctor holds dual Sudanese and British nationality. He suffers from Type 1 Diabetes and his family are concerned that he is not receiving adequate care in detention.

Amnesty International has received reports that members of other opposition parties, including 15 members of the Sudanese Congress Party, have also been arrested.

### Youth activists

Youth activists have also been targeted in the NISS round-up. On 23 September, six armed men from the NISS raided the home of Mohayed Siddig – a founding member of the youth movement “Sudan Change Now”. They arrested him after searching his home for more than two hours and confiscating his wife’s laptop, as well as CDs and documents.

Since his arrest, Mohayed has been held incommunicado without charge. Amnesty International believes that he is at great risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Other members of “Sudan Change Now” were also arrested, including Dahlia Al Roubi, and Rayan Zein Abideen, Omar Ushari, Amjed Farid and Khalid Omar. On 30 September Dahlia and Rayan were taken to the NISS building in Emarat area where they were held without charge, access to lawyers or their families. Amnesty International has received information that they have now been moved to an unknown

location

## Background

Protests broke out in cities around Sudan on 23 September after President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir announced cuts to fuel subsidies on 22 September. Since the start of the demonstrations the following day, security forces have used excessive force – including live ammunition – killing what is believed to be upwards of 200 protesters. They have censored and shutdown newspapers, and arrested hundreds of activists, members of political opposition parties, and journalists.

The number of deaths of protesters is estimated at 210 people in Khartoum alone, according to the Sudanese Doctors' Union. Amnesty International has spoken to doctors who report that the majority of deaths in hospital were due to gunshot wounds to the chest and head. The death toll estimate does not include people killed in other towns and cities in Sudan where protests continue, or those who were not taken to hospital.

Amnesty International has previously called for an immediate end to the harassment and unlawful arrest of human rights activists and members of the opposition for the lawful and peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and assembly. The organization has also urged the Sudanese government to immediately establish an investigation into the use of disproportionate force and allegations of the intentional killing of protesters and use of live ammunition by security forces