



To Permanent Representatives  
of Members and Observer States of the  
UN Human Rights Council

Geneva, 3 September 2015,

**RE: Gravely deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Sudan**

Excellency,

We write to share our serious concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in Sudan, marked by harsh political repression and continued impunity. There is increasing evidence that Sudanese security forces are committing war crimes in the conflict areas of Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. We call on your delegation to support the development and adoption of a strong and responsive resolution on Sudan under agenda Item 4 at the 30<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council in September.

Over the past four years in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, the Sudanese government has engaged in indiscriminate and targeted aerial bombardment of civilian areas, killing and wounding hundreds, if not thousands, of civilians. Government forces have destroyed civilian property including villages, health facilities, schools, mosques and churches, and the authorities continue to obstruct humanitarian assistance. Government forces and allied militia have also been implicated in alarming levels of sexual violence. Ongoing attacks and fighting have caused massive displacement over the past year.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past eighteen months in Darfur, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a new Sudanese special force under the command of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), have committed war crimes and other abuses that may amount to crimes against humanity in the context of two counterinsurgency campaigns. The levels of violence in Darfur in recent months is comparable to 2004: Government forces including the RSF have systematically burned and looted villages, raped untold numbers of women, and killed those who have resisted their attacks.

Impunity has become structural and generalized in the conflict areas, and this has only encouraged the continuation of the commission of serious crimes. Sudanese authorities have demonstrated a complete lack of will and capacity to genuinely investigate and prosecute international crimes by failing to establish effective, impartial, and independent accountability mechanisms. Instead of enabling victims of atrocities to obtain justice and reparation, the justice system has been continuously used as a mean to target and neutralize dissenting voices.

<sup>1</sup> Between 1 January-31 July 2015 up to 211,000 people were newly displaced by conflict in Darfur, 36,000 were displaced in Government controlled areas of Southern Kordofan, and 56,000 in Government controlled areas of Blue Nile state. See, OCHA, Sudan: Humanitarian snapshot as of 31 July 2015, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan\\_Humanitarian\\_Snapshot\\_31\\_Jul\\_2015\\_A4.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_Humanitarian_Snapshot_31_Jul_2015_A4.pdf).

Elsewhere in Sudan, the security forces have arrested and arbitrarily detained dozens of opposition party members, human rights defenders, students, and political activists in particular in the lead up to, during, and after the national elections held in April 2015. The arrests were accompanied by mass media censorship, including the confiscation of entire print runs of up to 14 newspapers on a single day and threatening calls to editors.

In May 2015, Sudan permitted visits by two UN human rights experts, namely the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. However these visits were undermined by access restrictions and an environment of intimidation. For example, on 16 May, two members of the Darfur Students' Association in Khartoum were arrested by seven plain-clothed security officers immediately after they left a meeting with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan. They were released on bail later that evening and charged with the publication of false news and disturbance of the public peace under the 1991 Criminal Act.

Moreover, Sudan has taken other steps to restrict human rights monitoring. Just a few months ago, it shut down the African Union/United Nations Mission in Darfur Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) human rights office in Khartoum after reports of mass rape in Tabit emerged, expelled key UN staff, and continues to block UNAMID peacekeepers from moving freely and fulfilling their mandate to protect civilians in Darfur, despite the intensification of violence and abuses.

It is time for the UN Human Rights Council to take stronger action in response to widespread and grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Sudan. We urge your delegation to ensure that the UN Human Rights Council adopts at its 30<sup>th</sup> session a resolution under agenda item 4 to:

- Strengthen the special procedure mandate on Sudan by extending it as a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan under item 4, with a mandate to monitor and publicly and periodically report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in all parts of Sudan.
- Request the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch investigation teams, with expertise in sexual and gender-based violence, to investigate crimes under international law and other widespread and serious violations and abuses of human rights in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, identify those responsible, and provide recommendations for accountability.
- Condemn in the strongest terms the grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile since June 2011, including the continued indiscriminate aerial bombing of civilian populated areas, the use of cluster bombs, and other indiscriminate attacks on civilians by Government forces and allied militia, as well as the continued blockade of humanitarian aid.
- Similarly condemn attacks targeting the civilian population and civilian objects in Darfur, in particular looting, destruction of civilian facilities, killings and sexual violence committed by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and other Sudanese Government forces, which has led to forced displacement of civilian populations; and express its deep concern over the allegations of mass rape in the north Darfur town of Tabit in October 2014.
- Urge the government of Sudan to allow unfettered access by UNAMID and humanitarian agencies and NGOs to all parts of Darfur and by humanitarian agencies, human rights monitors, and NGOs to all parts of Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.

- Address the continued impunity of security forces for the killing of scores of protesters in Khartoum and other cities in Sudan in September 2013 and urge the Government of Sudan to institute an independent public inquiry into the killings as requested by the Human Rights Council in its resolution on the human rights situation in Sudan at its 27<sup>th</sup> session.
- Condemn the continued restrictions on the media, on human rights defenders and political opponents, freedoms of association and of peaceful assembly, the use of arbitrary detention and torture, call for the release of individuals arbitrarily detained by the National Intelligence and Security Services, and urge the Government of Sudan to repeal the repressive National Security Act of 2010.

We annex to this letter a detailed briefing note on the situation of human rights since the adoption of the UN Human Rights Council's previous resolution on Sudan in September 2014.

We thank you for your attention to these pressing issues.

Sincerely,

- African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
- African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)
- Amnesty International
- CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation
- Conectas Human Rights
- Darfur Bar Association
- Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre
- East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
- Human Rights Watch
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Journalists for Human Rights - Sudan
- Sudan Consortium
- Sudanese Human Rights Initiative (SHRI)
- West African Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN / ROADDH)

**Annex:**  
**Situation of human rights in Sudan since September 2014**

Since the UN Human Rights Council passed its latest resolution on the situation in Sudan, new episodes of violence in Darfur, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile states have resulted in large numbers of civilian deaths and mass forced displacement. In addition, security forces have arrested dozens of opposition party members, students, and political activists, in the lead up to, during, and after the national elections that took place in April 2015.

**Darfur**

In Darfur, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a government force, under the command of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), and consisting largely of former militias created in mid-2013, led two brutal counterinsurgency campaigns during the past eighteen months. The RSF attacked civilians, burned and looted homes, raped and beat villagers and unlawfully killed an unknown number of civilians. During both campaigns the RSF has received aerial support and fought alongside Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) ground troops and other paramilitary and militia groups.

Human Rights Watch documented the mass rape of more than 200 women and girls by Sudanese armed forces in an organized attack on the north Darfur town of Tabit in October 2014.<sup>2</sup> Sudan denied the allegations and refused peacekeepers access to the town. On 9 November, it allowed the peacekeepers brief access, but security forces prevented them from carrying out a credible investigation and reportedly intimidated residents.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of her visit to Sudan in May 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women urged the Government of Sudan to “set up a Commission of Inquiry, consisting of both national and international persons, to look into the reports of allegations of mass rapes in different regions, including recent allegations regarding the village of Thabit [sic].”<sup>4</sup> Shortly after, the print runs of ten newspapers were confiscated by the NISS on 25 May. Though no reasons were given, the independent daily Al Jazeera newspaper was running with the headline “Independent Expert calls for Investigation Committee in Mass Rape Allegations”.

In December 2014, the Sudanese government re-launched Operation Decisive Summer, attacking villages in Jebel Marra and East Jebel Marra by air and land. In their 19 January 2015 report the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan characterised the Government strategy in Darfur as one of “collective punishment of villages and communities from which the armed opposition groups are believed to come or operate” and “induced or forced displacement of those communities”, with “direct engagement, including aerial bombardment, of the [armed rebel] groups when their location can be identified.”<sup>5</sup> Their report described a pattern of air attacks followed by RSF ground attacks on civilian areas, including the destruction and looting of villages, accompanied by an “especially high” number of killings. The UN Panel of Experts reported the use of airstrikes on civilian targets in violation of Security Council resolution 1591 (2005). One incident reported by the ICC Prosecutor included the burning of ten villages in East Jebel Marra on 26 January by the RSF after a campaign of aerial

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<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Mass Rape in Darfur,” February 11, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/02/11/mass-rape-north-darfur/sudanese-army-attacks-against-civilians-tabit>.

<sup>3</sup> UNAMID press release,

<sup>4</sup> Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women finalizes country mission to Sudan and calls for more open and constructive dialogues on violence against women, its causes and consequences, 24 May 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16009&LangID=E>.

<sup>5</sup> UN Security Council. Letter dated 16 January 2015 from the Vice-Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan addressed to the President of the Security Council, 19 January 2015, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/31](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/31).

bombardment by the SAF.<sup>6</sup> The UN Secretary General's latest report on UNAMID on 26 May noted that UNAMID found evidence of two cluster bombs in North Darfur.<sup>7</sup>

The human rights violations associated with the attacks included the forced displacement of entire communities; the destruction of the physical infrastructure necessary for sustaining life in a harsh desert environment (i.e. wells, food stores, shelter, farming implements); the plunder of the collective wealth of families, such as livestock; and widespread, severe physical and sexual abuse, including mass rape, torture and killings.

Many survivors of RSF attacks fled to camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in government-controlled territory or the hills and mountains outside of government-controlled areas.

On 21 August 2015, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published a new report on Impunity and Accountability in Darfur for 2014.<sup>8</sup>

### **Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile**

Sudanese government forces have continued to engage in a four-year campaign of ground and indiscriminate aerial attacks in rebel-held areas of the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, since fighting between Sudanese Government forces and the armed opposition, the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N), began in June and September 2011.

Human Rights Watch alone documented more than 100 civilian casualties in 2014 and 2015 from aerial bombardment or after the initial attack by unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war in Southern Kordofan.<sup>9</sup> This included the death of 26 children. Sudanese human rights monitors documented numerous additional instances of bombing, shelling, and civilian casualties during this period.<sup>10</sup> There is also evidence suggesting that government aircraft deliberately bombed hospitals and other humanitarian facilities, and that Sudan dropped cluster bombs on civilian areas of Southern Kordofan's Nuba Mountains in February, March and June 2015.<sup>11</sup> Amnesty International also documented that between January and April 2015, the Sudanese air force dropped 374 bombs in 60 locations across South Kordofan.<sup>12</sup> Since 2011, the SAF has bombed 26 health facilities (hospitals, clinics and health units). There are only two hospitals operating to serve a population of 1.2 million people. In one case, Médecins Sans Frontières documented how a Sudan Air Force fighter jet dropped 13 bombs, of which two landed inside a hospital compound and the others just outside the hospital fence.<sup>13</sup>

The impact of aerial bombardments has also violated the right to education in South Kordofan. There were six secondary schools in SPLA-N controlled areas when the conflict began but now only three secondary schools remain operational. The enrolment of children to schools in SPLA-N controlled areas has further declined from

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<sup>6</sup> International Criminal Court, Officer of the Prosecutor, Twenty-first report pursuant to paragraph 8 of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1593, 29 June 2015, para 18, [http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/21st-report-of-the-Prosecutor-to-the-UNSC-on-Darfur\\_%20Sudan.pdf](http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/21st-report-of-the-Prosecutor-to-the-UNSC-on-Darfur_%20Sudan.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, 26 May 2015, para 50, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/378](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/378).

<sup>8</sup> Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Impunity and Accountability in Darfur for 2014, 21 August 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SD/ImpunityAccountabilityInDarfur2014.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch news release, "Bombing Campaign's Heavy Toll on Children," May 6, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/05/06/sudan-bombing-campaigns-heavy-toll-children>.

<sup>10</sup> Available at [http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur\\_crisis/SKBNUupdates.html](http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_crisis/SKBNUupdates.html)

<sup>11</sup> The Sudan Consortium "Eight cluster bombs fall on Umdorein County" June 2015 [http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur\\_consortium\\_actions/reports/2015/SKBJune2015FINAL.pdf](http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_consortium_actions/reports/2015/SKBJune2015FINAL.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International: Don't We Matter?: Four Years of Unrelenting Attacks against Civilians in Sudan's South Kordofan State, 4 August 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/2162/2015/en/>

<sup>13</sup> Médecins Sans Frontières, "MSF hospital bombed in South Kordofan," 22 January 2015, <http://www.msf.org/article/sudan-msf-hospital-bombed-south-kordofan>.

3000 to about 300-500 secondary school pupils. Further 30 primary schools have been closed and enrolment numbers have dropped by 23,000 since 2011.

The use of aerial bombardment and flights over civilian villages and communities has been a consistent practice of the Sudan Air Force since the beginning of conflict in 2011. Aerial bombardment in May and June 2015 disrupted cultivation activities before the rainy season, as well as having had a profound psychological impact over the course of the conflict.<sup>14</sup>

In Blue Nile, Government forces, again including the RSF, arbitrarily detained residents, raped women and girls, and restricted residents' movements, farming, and access to food.<sup>15</sup> Entire communities have been displaced by Government forces in what appears to be collective punishment for their perceived support to the rebel movements based on ethnic identity. The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) documented that between April and May 2015 the SAF burned three villages, comprised mainly of people from the Ingessana ethnic group, to the ground and ordered the residents of at least four others to evacuate their homes. Residents told ACJPS they were threatened with arrest for presumed membership in the opposition party if they stayed behind. A campaign of incommunicado and arbitrary detentions followed the displacements.<sup>16</sup> The Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG) documented the burning by SAF of two additional Blue Nile villages in May.<sup>17</sup>

The SPLA-N has also launched retaliation attacks on civilian communities presumed to support Government forces. Seven civilians were killed on 12 April when the SPLA-N shelled Almadina 10, just south of El Damazein, presumed to be occupied by pro-government civilians, three days after the SAF burned and forcibly displaced the residents of Mediam al Jabal village.<sup>18</sup>

Further, the long-standing denial of access to SPLA-N controlled areas by the government of Sudan has contributed to a protracted and deepening humanitarian crisis. For instance, in the face of a measles outbreak in May 2014 to January 2015, children in SPLA-N controlled areas did not have access to a nationwide vaccination campaign spearheaded by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organisation (WHO). Although 1400 children were vaccinated in a local hospital, 30 children died from what is generally a preventable disease.<sup>19</sup>

### **Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and torture**

In the lead up to, during, and after the national elections, that took place from 13 to 16 April 2015, Security forces in Sudan arrested dozens of opposition party members, students, and political activists.<sup>20</sup> Many reported they were detained for several days and subjected to harsh beatings before being released without

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<sup>14</sup> Sudan Consortium report, at [http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur\\_crisis/SKBNUupdates.html](http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_crisis/SKBNUupdates.html)

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch news release, "Soldiers, Militias, Killing, Raping Civilians," December 14, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/14/sudan-soldiers-militias-killing-raping-civilians>.

<sup>16</sup> ACJPS, "Sudan forcibly displaces and sets villages on fire in Blue Nile; civilians presumed to be affiliated with rebels detained incommunicado" <http://www.acjps.org/sudan-forcibly-displaces-and-sets-villages-on-fire-in-blue-nile-civilians-presumed-to-be-affiliated-with-rebels-detained-incommunicado/>.

<sup>17</sup> Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG), "Blue Nile State Under Fire", 28 May 2015, <http://us7.campaign-archive2.com/?u=7acabab6ae470b89628f88514&id=6625daa914>.

<sup>18</sup> ACJPS, "Attacks on Civilians by Sudanese Armed Forces and Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Movement – North in Blue Nile", 1 May 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/attacks-on-civilians-by-sudanese-armed-forces-and-sudanese-peoples-liberation-movement-north-in-blue-nile/>

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International: Don't We Matter?: Four Years of Unrelenting Attacks against Civilians in Sudan's South Kordofan State, 4 August 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/2162/2015/en/>

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Surge in Detention, Beatings, Around Elections", April 28, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/28/sudan-surge-detention-beatings-around-elections>.

charge. Government security forces continued to arrest and detain political activists, particularly members of the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP), in the following months.<sup>21</sup>

Other high-profile human rights and opposition figures were also detained. For example, prominent human rights defender Amin Mekki Medani, political opposition leader Farouq Abu Eissa, and political activist Farah Ibrahim Alagar, were detained for over four months for attending negotiations between political and armed opposition groups.<sup>22</sup> They were arrested on 6 and 7 December 2014 after returning from negotiations in Addis Ababa, which led to the adoption of the “Sudan Call”, an opposition declaration calling for democracy and an end to conflicts. The men were held incommunicado for 15 days before being transferred to Kober prison and charged with crimes against the state that carry the death penalty. They were released on 9 April 2015 after the Minister of Justice exercised discretionary powers to drop the case.<sup>23</sup>

The NISS has broad powers of arrest and detention for up to four and a half months without judicial review, well beyond the international standard. Amendments to the constitution in January 2015 further empowered the NISS by designating it as a regular force with a broader mandate of combatting a range of political and social threats and taking precautionary measures against them. The service is known for its abusive tactics, including torture, against real or perceived political opponents.

### **Restrictions to freedom of expression, freedoms of association and peaceful assembly**

As in past years, the NISS has continued to censor the media by confiscating print runs of newspapers often without giving reasons and instructing editors not to publish on “red-line” topics. On 16 February the print runs of 14 newspapers were confiscated by the NISS without reasons being given.<sup>24</sup> Media sources speculated that the confiscations could have been linked to reports of military gains made by the SPLA-N or reports of containers with radioactive materials found at Port Sudan. On 25 May, authorities confiscated 10 newspapers. At least one paper confiscated had featured, on its front page, details of a press conference held the previous day by the UN Expert on Violence against Women who was concluding a visit to the country.<sup>25</sup>

Security officials also continue to arrest journalists and obstruct their work. In July, three journalists were arrested while covering a doctors’ strike in Gedarif. In January, the editor of the independent Al Maidan newspaper, Madiha Abdulla, was charged with crimes against the state in connection with articles published in the paper including comments made by an SPLA-N leader.<sup>26</sup> The case is ongoing. Four other journalists are on trial facing similar charges.

Authorities have also continued to restrict the activities of civil society organizations. For instance, civil society organizations are not able to hold public events in their own premises unless they have permission from NISS, and on many occasions permission is denied.<sup>27</sup> In the lead up to the elections, on 26 March, armed NISS officers raided the Khartoum-based TRACKS for Training and Human Development whilst it was hosting a training session on social responsibility. Participants were accused of discussing the boycott of the upcoming

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<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International “URGENT ACTION, Three Opposition Members Harassed by NISS”, 17 August 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/2271/2015/en/>.

<sup>22</sup> FIDH, “African Commission should call on Sudan to release prominent activists facing stiff penalties in national security trial”, 20 February 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/Africa/sudan/17034-african-commission-should-call-on-sudan-to-release-prominent-activists>.

<sup>23</sup> FIDH, “Release of human rights activist” 13 April 2015,” <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/impacts/sudan-release-of-human-rights-defender-dr-amin-mekki-medani>

<sup>24</sup> ACJPS, “Sharp increase in media restrictions 5 weeks before Sudanese General Elections”, 26 February 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/sharp-increase-in-media-restrictions-5-weeks-before-sudanese-general-elections/>; FIDH, “Detentions, civil society closures, media restrictions on eve of Sudan elections”, 12 April 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/Africa/sudan/detentions-civil-society-closures-media-restrictions-on-eve-of-sudan>.

<sup>25</sup> ACJPS, “Mass censorship of Khartoum newspapers during official visit of human rights experts”, 26 May 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/mass-censorship-of-khartoum-newspapers-during-official-visit-of-human-rights-experts/>.

<sup>26</sup> See footnote 18

<sup>27</sup> Amnesty International, Sudan: Entrenched Repression, Freedom of Expression and Association under Unprecedented attack, 1 April 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/1364/2015/en/>

General Elections. Property, including four laptop computers and the central computer server, was seized. Three weeks later, human rights defender Adil Bakheit, whose laptop had been confiscated, was arrested. He was held in police custody for 17 days before his release on bail. He continues to face the risk of an unfair trial on baseless criminal charges, including offences that carry the death penalty, in connection with his peaceful work in defence of human rights.<sup>28</sup>

In February, officials closed the Sudanese Writer's Union, and on 18 January, they raided the Mahmoud Mohammed Taha Cultural Center during an event marking the thirtieth anniversary of the execution of Taha, a renowned secular Islamic scholar, and ordered the center closed down.<sup>29</sup> Earlier, on 21 December 2014, the NISS raided the offices of the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM) in Khartoum whilst a workshop on the Universal Periodic Review of Sudan taking place. Workshop participants were required to leave and a number of laptops and documents were confiscated.<sup>30</sup> No formal notice was served.<sup>31</sup>

### Freedom of religion

In December 2014 and January 2015, authorities arrested two South Sudanese pastors and detained them for more than seven months, charging them with various serious crimes that carry the death penalty and flogging including undermining the constitution, espionage, and waging war against the state. They were arrested after making public remarks criticizing a corruption scandal at a Khartoum Church and the treatment of Christians in Sudan. They were detained incommunicado by the NISS until 1 March when they were charged by the Prosecutor with crimes against the state and transferred to Kober Prison.<sup>32</sup> They received their first family visit on 2 March and were released on 5 August.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these cases, Amnesty International documented the arrest and detention of twelve Christian female students by the Public Order Police (POP) on 25 June. While two of the students were released, the other 10 were charged with "indecent dress" under Article 152 of Sudan's 1991 Criminal Act. This charge carries the punishment of flogging. Eight girls have now been freed, two girls have appealed their sentences, including Fardous Al toum who has been sentenced to 20 lashes.<sup>34</sup>

The government of Sudan amended the Criminal Code provision to widen the definition of apostasy to target other school of Islam as well as anyone who questions the 'credibility of the Quran, the Sahaba (the four Caliphs), or the wives of the Prophet' and provide penalties up to five years of imprisonment."

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<sup>28</sup> ACJPS, "Sudanese human rights defender detained on baseless charges and others at risk after armed raid on Khartoum training centre", 18 April 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/sudanese-human-rights-defender-detained-on-baseless-charges-and-others-at-risk-after-armed-raid-on-khartoum-based-training-centre/>; FIDH, "Sudan: release on bail of Mr. Adil Bakheit", 18 May 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/Africa/sudan/sudan-release-on-bail-of-mr-adil-bakheit>.

<sup>29</sup> ACJPS, "Sudan's Ministry of Culture orders the closure of the Sudanese Writer's Union", 3 February 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/sudans-ministry-of-culture-orders-the-closure-of-the-sudanese-writers-union/>.

<sup>30</sup> FIDH, "Sudan: continued detentions without charges against Dr Amin Mekki Medani, Mr Farouq Abu Eissa, and Dr Farah Ibrahim Mohamed Alagar [Update]", 12 January 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/Africa/sudan/16767-sudan-continued-detentions-and-capital-charges-against-dr-amin-mekki>.

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch news release, "Surge in Detentions, Beatings, Around Elections," April 28, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/28/sudan-surge-detention-beatings-around-elections>.

<sup>32</sup> ACJPS, "Two South Sudanese Pastors face death penalty for voicing opposition to corruption scandal at Khartoum Bahri Church", 2 June 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/two-south-sudanese-pastors-face-death-penalty-for-voicing-opposition-to-corruption-scandal-at-khartoum-bahri-church/>.

<sup>33</sup> Amnesty International, Sudan: Further information: Two pastors sentenced to time served, released: Reverend Yat Michael and Reverend Peter Yen, 6 August 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/2237/2015/en/>.

<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International, Sudan: URGENT ACTION, Eight Girls Free, One other risks flogging, 21 August, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/2302/2015/en/> Amnesty International, Sudan: 10 Christian Women at risk of flogging for indecent dress, 12 July, 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/07/sudan-10-christian-women-at-risk-of-flogging-for-indecent-dress/>