

Sudan: Torture, Abuse of Demonstrators Human Rights Watch 11 July 2012 The Sudanese authorities should immediately stop the torture and ill-treatment of those detained following demonstrations since mid-June 2012, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said today.

“Torture and other ill-treatment are absolutely prohibited under international law,” said Aster van Kregten, Amnesty International’s deputy director for Africa. “We call on the Sudanese authorities to ensure that every credible allegation of such abuse is subject to prompt and impartial investigations, and to ensure that the victims receive reparations.”

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also urged the immediate and unconditional release of anyone arrested for participating in peaceful protests. Sudanese groups monitoring the arrests estimate that since June the Sudanese security forces have detained 2,000 people in connection with the youth-led protests in Khartoum and other major towns across Sudan. While the number of 2,000 detained is difficult to confirm, reports indicate that at least 100 people remain in detention in Khartoum alone. The majority are being held in National Security Services (NSS) detention centers, which are well known for the use of ill-treatment and torture.

In one of the latest crackdowns on protesters, on July 6, security forces used excessive force against a demonstration in the Sayyid Abdelrahman mosque, in the Wad Nubawi neighbourhood of Omdurman, a suburb of Khartoum.

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Since the protests began on June 16, Sudanese security forces have repeatedly used excessive force to disperse the demonstrations and arrested scores of peaceful protesters including students, youth activists, and journalists.

Security officials have also separately arrested and detained activists, journalists, lawyers, doctors, and members of youth groups and opposition parties not directly connected to the protests.

Many detainees have been released after hours or days, often after signing a statement renouncing any political activities or participation in the protests. Other individuals are detained for longer periods and face lengthy interrogations in which they are accused of being traitors, communists, or spies; several have reported harsh treatment, including beatings and sleep-deprivation.

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“Instead of responding to the protesters’ concerns, the Sudanese government appears to be targeting select individuals for their presumed political views,” said Daniel Bekele, Africa director of Human Rights Watch. “Sudan should immediately release those detained for engaging in political protests, and respect their right to exercise freedom of expression and association.”

Those released from security detention are often afraid to report their ordeal to organizations or journalists. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch interviewed more than 13 former detainees who reported beatings, verbal insults, food, water and sleep-deprivation, and other ill-treatment while in detention in Khartoum and its suburbs since mid-June.

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Protests have been taking place on a near-daily basis since mid-June, notably in Khartoum and the neighbouring cities of Omdurman and Khartoum North, but also in the cities of al-Obeid, Port Sudan, Atbarah, Dongola, Kassala, and Gedaref. In these provincial towns, as in the capital, security forces have been using excessive force against demonstrations and arresting large numbers of protesters and known activists.

Sudanese authorities have also routinely censored newspapers, removing articles about sensitive topics and seizing entire print runs of specific issues, and have harassed and arrested journalists who report on anti-government protests.

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