

African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies



Report on:

Freedom of Expression July – September 2018

Future development: -----	3
Denials of distributing of printed copies of newspapers: -----	4
Ban on TV talk Show: -----	5
Ban on writing: -----	5
Arbitrary arrest: -----	6
Hacking of Ministry Website: -----	9

Future development

The proposed amendments of the Media and publication law extends restrictions to online media.

On 21 June 2018, Sudanese Ministers Council passed the proposed amendments of the 2009 media and publication law indoors. This makes it easy for the national assembly to pass it since the ruling party (National Congress party) has the majority of members in the Sudanese Parliament.

The amendment focuses on the following areas;

According to article 4 of the law, the media and publication council is granted jurisdiction over newspapers. Under Article 9, the power of the council to approve the licence of online newspapers is extended to include the online media.

The article states that;

- 1- The council has the right to approve online media link.

2- The Media and publication council will be under the supervision of the president of the state.

Article 13 of the 2009 law which governs the selection of the chairperson of the media and publication council was repealed and replaced by a provision granting the President the right to appoint the chairperson of the council. Article 33 of the 2009 law was also amended to grant the media and publication council more power to apply penalties; including the right to ban journalist from writing without stating specific periods and temporary withdrawal of journalist's licences. Article 35 was amended to grant court the power to cancel licences of the newspapers.

Denial of distribution of printed copies of news papers

On 8 June 2018, the NISS confiscated print runs of Al Sahafa newspaper without giving any rationale.

On 10 June 2018, the NISS confiscated printed copies of Al-Tayaar newspaper.

On 15 June 2018, the NISS confiscated printed copies of Alyoum Altaali newspaper.

On 24 and 26 June 2018, the NISS prevented the distribution of Al - Gareca newspaper without any justification.

On 24 June 2018, orders came from a representative of the national security agency prohibiting national newspapers from publishing.

On 22 and 26 July 2018, NISS confiscated printed copies of both Al gareeda and Al Masadir newspapers.

On 31 of July 2018, NISS denied Al gareeda from distributing printed copies of the newspapers before 8:00am.

On 1 August 2018, the NISS denied the distribution of printed copies of Al watan and Al-Tyaar newspapers without providing any justification.

On 27 August 2018, the NISS denied the distribution of printed copies of both Al-Siha and Algareeda newspapers.

On 31 August 2018, the NISS denied Al-Raie Alaam, Algareeda and Alisha newspapers from distributing printed copies of the newspapers.

On 10 and 11 September 2018, NISS denied Al-Siha and Al Tayaar distribution of printed copies.

On 13 September NISS confiscated the printed copies of Al gareeda newspaper.

Ban of TV talk Show

On 31 August 2018, the NISS of Khartoum banned Mr Abdelbagi Alzafir from running a Television show called Al-Midan Alshargi, broadcasted by Omdrman where he had planned to host speakers including; Al Sadig Al mahadi, chairperson of Umaa Party, Abdulaziz Ushar, a leader within the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Ibrahim El Sheiekh, leader within the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP). In addition, he was also banned from participating in any talk show broadcasted within Sudan. The ban follows his criticism of the decision of the current Sudanese president, His Excellency Omar Al-Bashir to re run in the next general election of 2020. Mr Alzafir works as Journalist with Alisha newspaper.

Ban on writing

On 7 July 2018, NISS banned the chief editor of Al-shia newspaper, Mr. Ahmed Yousef Altai from writing. The following day on 8th of July 2018, NISS informed Mr. Altai to resume his activities. Banning from writing is one of the violations to freedom of expression practised by NISS since 2013.

On 23 July 2018, journalist Hiba Obid, a parliament reporter working with Al-Entebaha newspaper that is affiliated with the ruling party was banned by the security unit of parliament from entering the Parliament building. According to reliable sources, reasons for the ban related to an article published by Ms. Obid where she indicated that TV cameras at the cost of 90.000.000 Sudanese Pounds were installed in parliament without its clear justification. She also mentioned that the fact that members of parliament are usually busy with their smart phones during parliamentary sessions cannot be the justification for spending such big amount of money.

On 26 July 2018, the information desk of the Sudanese Parliament banned 12 newspaper Journalist from entering the parliament and reporting on parliamentary activities until the end of the current legislative session which ends in October 2018. The decision came after journalist covering parliamentary sessions announced that they will boycott parliament activities on 24 and 25 of July 2018 as peaceful demonstration against the decision to ban Ms. Hiba Obid from entering parliament

building. Media houses including the Khartoum Channel, Alshrouq, Sudanese 24, the Sudan News Agency and the Sudanese centre for services and journalism were exempted from the ban.

On 1 August 2018, a group of Journalist demonstrated peacefully before the Parliament building to deliver an appeal letter against their ban but the chairperson of Parliament refused to receive their letter.

Arbitrary arrest:

On 8 September 2018, the NISS summoned a female, Lina Yagooub the chief editor of bag, an electronic website. She was interrogated about her source of information on what she published about the trail of former NISS officer, Abdulgafar El Sharif. She was released the following day at 4:00pm. The Bag news website is active on following cases of corruption related to members of the ruling party.

On 9 September summoned Maha Eltelib who works for Al Tayaar newspaper after she published on 8 September an information related to the final ceremony of the South Sudan's peace agreement that would held in Addis Ababa rather than in Khartoum as a

result of the intervention of the Ethiopian prime minister, Mr Abi Ahamed. Ms Maha Eltelib was released after 2 hours.

On 26 July 2018, NISS arrested Mr. Ahmed Aldai Bushara from his home in Alsalha of Omdurman and he remains in incommunicado. His arrest comes after he filmed and published videos of people queuing to buy bread from bakeries located on the main streets of Khartoum. The videos were published on his channel and also shared on social media at the time when the Sudanese president, His Excellency Omar Al Bashir travelled to Russia to attend the final match of the world cup.

On 31 July 2018, police officers dressed in plain clothing arrested Mr Mohamed Osman Babiker Idris from his home in Al Jazeera state, approximately 25 Kilometres south of Khartoum. He was then transferred to central Khartoum police station and detained for a day. On 1 August 2018, he was transferred to the central police station in Kassala state where he spent two days in detention before being released on 3 August 2018. Mr Babiker Idris was charged under article 17 of Sudanese Information Law 2018. The complainant is an official at the Office of the Governor of Kassala state. At the time of his arrest, Idris was an employee of the Emaar East Fund and held previous jobs as a journalist for “Al Sahafa” newspaper and he is currently collaborating with Al-Siha newspaper as part time job. The reason for his arrest was about an article he

published a few months in Al- Sahafa newspaper stating that the current governor of Kasala, Mr Adam Jamaa was not welcomed by the community leader of the Hadandwa tribe.

On 31 July 2018, NISS officers from Kassala state arrested Mr Mutasim Ahmed Sadook, a 50-year-old electrician living in central Kassala. Mr Sadook is also a blogger known for publishing articles on the political situation of eastern Sudan on social media. He was released the following day on 1 August 2018 at 1am. He was interrogated about an article he published on social media accusing government of kasala of corruption. For the next three days, he kept reporting to the NISS office of Kasala from 9am to 9pm until 5 August 2018 when he was released on bail. He was later transferred to a police station where he was charged with defamation under article 17 of Sudanese Information Law 2018.

On 3 September 2018, the NISS of Algardarif State of Eastern Sudan interrogated Mr Amar Aldaw, the correspondent of Al-Siha newspaper publication from Khartoum. The interrogation which lasted about an hour was about a report he published in the newspaper about a government jet spray that damaged about 30 hectares of crops.

On 29 August 2018, the NISS of Khartoum arrested Mr. Alwathig Jar Alelim, a graduate student of faculty of Art following his criticism of president Omar Al Bashir's decision to

run for the 2020 general election on the TV show of Al Midan Sahrgi broadcast by Omdrman television. He released later on the same day.

Hacking of the Ministry of communication's Website

On 26 July 2018, the website of the Sudanese Ministry of Communications was hacked by a hacker with the username “Harass Al Hudood” (border guard control). On the website, the hacker published a request for the immediate removal of President Omar El Bashir from office. This is the second time this website has been hacked by this user after it was first hacked on 14 August 2017.

The term “Border Guard” refers to the name given to the Janjaweed militias in 2004 in the midst of the Darfur conflict with the central government. Initially, the Janjaweed had been operating in alliance with the Sudanese government in a mission to uproot Darfurians from their land. Then following a dispute between high level officials in the central government and a general in the Janjaweed militia named Musa Abdullah Hilal, the Janjaweed detached itself from the autonomous control of the central Government and continued operations under the command of general Hilal. However, on November 26th 2017, Hilal was arrested by central police.

Censorship development

On 6 August 2018, media committee of the Sudanese Parliament organized a meeting headed by director of NISS Mr Salah Abdalla and attended by Mohamed Hamid Tabidi and Ibrahim Armed Omer (the chairperson of the parliament) and a number of chief editors of hard copy and online newspapers. The meeting discussed the code of conduct as well as the “redlines” and agreed on a monthly meeting to review the “redline”. Participants suggested that the journalist union must select a committee to draft a code of conduct identifying information and news that can be a threat to security.