

## Sudan releases members of 'Girifna' amid reports of torture

Thursday 8 July 2010

July 8, 2010 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese authorities released three activist members of Girifna who were arrested yesterday and charged with two counts, the group said in a statement released on Wednesday.

The three students were arrested by police and allegedly tortured while in the custody of security services on Monday, apparently due to their association with the Girifna movement which is involved in peaceful political activities and critical of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).

Hassan Ishaq, Iz El-Deen Al-Ansari and Hassan Mohamed were distributing Girifna's magazine, in Souk Sitaa (Market 6) of the Alhaj Yousif area of Khartoum North at 6.30PM when they were arrested.

Girifna, an Arabic term which means "we are fed up", is a non-violent social movement that began during the Sudanese voter registration to encourage civic participation and voter education through door-to-door campaigning and demonstrations. It is estimated that over 7,000 copies of the magazine were distributed throughout Khartoum and Omdurman on its first days of publication.

The three men were taken to local police station in Alhaj Yousif Area and were charged under Articles 69 (breach of public peace), and 63 (sedition) of the Sudanese Criminal Code of 1991.

Later that evening, National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) agents took the detainees from police custody to their offices, where they were allegedly subject to torture and questioned extensively about the Girifna movement before being taken back to police custody.

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACPJ) said in a statement that "These arrests are the latest in a string of attacks on civil society in Sudan, which has seen an increasingly repressive environment for human rights defenders in the months since the elections. The tactic of referring detainees from police custody to NISS offices has begun to be employed systematically, sending clear signals to civil society and the broader human rights community that any offence will be treated as a national security issue".

ACPJ has called on the government of Sudan "to respect the freedom of expression, guaranteed by the Interim National Constitution (INC), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as guarantee their right to a fair trial and immediately investigate allegations of torture".

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