

Security police prevent publication of Sudan newspapers

KHARTOUM, Sudan - Eight newspapers have been prevented from publication and distribution by National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), this week, amidst protests against recent austerity measures. Yesterday, the *Almidan* newspaper was prevented by the NISS from distributing its daily print runs without any rationale.



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Between 7-9 January 2018, the National Intelligence and Security Services visited Khartoum's printing houses and confiscated the entire print runs of six newspapers without giving reasons.

On 8 January 2018, the NISS confiscated the daily print-runs of *Aljazeera*, an independent newspaper and *Albaath*, a newspaper affiliated with Arabic Baath Party, without giving reasons. The lead story of *Aljazeera* newspaper which was confiscated covered [the student protests](#) that took place in El Geneina, West Darfur, the previous day.

On the morning of 7 January, NISS officials prevented six daily newspapers in Khartoum from distributing printed copies with no rationale given. They include:

- *Altayyar*, a traditionally pro-government newspaper.
- *Almustagila*, a traditionally pro-government newspaper.
- *Algarar*, a traditionally pro-government newspaper.
- *Alsiha*, a traditionally pro-government newspaper.
- *Akhbar- alwatan*, affiliated with Sudanese Congress Party.
- *Almidan*, traditionally affiliated with the Sudanese Communist Party.
- Yesterday, the *Almidan* newspaper was prevented from distributing its daily print runs without any rationale

It is very likely that the confiscations relate to their coverage of the peaceful protests against the government that took place on 5 and 6 January in Khartoum, Aljazeera and Kassala states. On 5 and 6 January, Khartoum, Aljazeera, and Kassala witnessed protests against the new increases in the prices of basic commodities, fuel and electricity tariffs.

According to reliable sources, on 5 January 2018, the NISS ordered editors-in-chief of the different newspapers not to cover any demonstrations related to the austerity measures or reports on shortage of bread and oil.

Censorship is often ramped up around key events with post-print censorship, whereby entire print-runs of daily editions are confiscated prior to morning distribution, at great cost to newspapers, which along with other forms of harassment and intimidation enforces self-censorship as editors are unable to afford to publish opinions that might result in the print run being confiscated.

Authorities also tightened restrictions to prevent coverage of the [nationwide anti-austerity protests in 2013](#); in April 2015, to prevent coverage of [an elections boycott by opposition parties](#); and again in November 2016 to prevent coverage of [the civil disobedience campaign protesting anti-austerity measures](#) introduced in early November

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) reiterates previous calls to the Government of Sudan to immediately end its policies of pre- and post- print censorship of newspapers, which severely circumscribes the availability of information in the public sphere and hinders freedom of expression and access to information: “We recommend that the Sudanese Government provide compensation to the various newspapers for financial loss incurred as a result of the confiscations.”

Background

In recent years, it has become a daily ritual for NISS officers to visit Khartoum’s printing houses in the early morning hours to seize print runs or prevent the distribution of morning papers without giving any reasons. Post-print censorship is routinely used by the NISS to intimidate editors from publishing on what are often referred to as ‘red line’ issues, which are issues that the authorities deem sensitive and seek to control in public debate. It is also thought to have the intended impact of causing editors to self-censor to avoid financial losses.

ACJPS noted a marked increase in post-print censorship in November and December 2017 with at least six newspapers being constantly targeted over this period. In November 2017, [ACJPS documented 5 incidents of post-print censorship](#) carried out by officials of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) against 6 media houses. [Four newspapers who had faced repeated prevention from distribution](#) in November continued to suffer post print censorship in December 2017 on more than one occasion.

The NISS has increasingly sought to censor not only independent newspapers or those affiliated to opposition political parties, but also those that are traditionally supportive of or affiliated to the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).