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## **SUDAN | Peaceful Protests Continue Amid Crackdown**

Over 200 people reportedly died and an estimated 500 may have been injured as Sudanese security forces continue to use live ammunition on unarmed anti-government protestors. The demonstrations have continued into their ninth day amid a clampdown on press freedom and mass arrests of activists.

Peaceful demonstrations began last week in Wad Madani, parts of Khartoum, Port Sudan, Gadarif, Sinaar and Nyala to protest the government's decision to lift fuel and food subsidies, which caused these commodities to double in price overnight. The protests soon evolved into a demand for the government's downfall, with protesters adopting chants made popular during the Arab Uprisings. The demand became stronger as security services responded to protestors with disproportionate force, firing teargas, rubber bullets and live rounds. According to the Ministry of Interior, the death toll stands at 29. In an interview with Sudanese media Dr. Ahmed Al Sheikh, the head of the Sudanese Doctors' Syndicate, said at least 210 people had died, mostly from gunshot wounds to the head and chest, with families forced to accept death certificates stating their relatives had died of "natural causes."

The National Intelligence Security Services (NISS) reportedly arrested 700 people, including many activists in Khartoum, Wad Madani, and Port of Sudan, whilst opposition leaders remain under surveillance. Press freedom has been curtailed further; on Sept. 25, internet access was shut down, and mobile phone networks have remained jammed since Sept. 26 in an attempt to hinder the ability to organize protests. On Sept. 27, journalists from Al-Sahafa resigned in protest at censorship by the Sudanese security services. On the same day, the authorities closed down Al-Arabiya and Sky News Arabia Service television stations due to their coverage of the protests.

On Sept. 29, Sudan's largest newspaper house, Al-Arabaya, run by President al-Bashir's uncle, Al Tayeb Mustafa, was forcibly shut down. Before its closure, Al-Arabaya reported that 5,000 protesters had taken to the streets in Khartoum alone after Friday prayers on Sept. 27. Commentators noted that the day's protests were one of the most diverse, comprising thousands of citizens representing Sudan's different social groups, an indication of a

strengthening popular voice against the Khartoum regime, which has a history of suppressing the media, civil society, opposition parties, and religious minorities.

The government's use of excessive force against unarmed protesters has occasioned international expressions of concern from amongst others, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton, and the UK, French and American governments.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We extend our condolences to the families of those killed during the on-going protests. CSW condemns the use of lethal force by the Sudanese authorities against unarmed protesters. The right of citizens to gather and protest peacefully is guaranteed in international legislation to which Sudan is a signatory, as is the right to life. The international community must hold the government of President al- Bashir to account for its human rights violations, and put pressure on the regime for the swift release of all who have been detained arbitrarily in connection with these protests, as they are at serious risk of torture and other cruel inhuman and degrading treatment."