

Sudanese government blocks online newspaper

Online Arabic newspaper *Hurriyat Sudan* has reported that the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) has blocked its website since 25 June 2012, following its coverage of protests in Khartoum and other towns.

Since the outbreak of demonstrations in Sudan on 17 June, Sudanese security forces have deliberately targeted journalists, bloggers and activists. On 26 June, the Sudanese government deported Salma al-Wardany, an Egyptian reporter working for Bloomberg, and rearrested Sudanese citizen journalist Maha El-Sanusi for three hours.

They had both been detained together for several hours on 21 June. Simon Martelli, an AFP journalist, was also arrested on 19 June and held for 12 hours while covering a student demonstration in Khartoum.

Hurriyat readers in Sudan reported that the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) started blocking the site from about 5.30PM Sudan time on 25 June. The NTC maintains a special filtering unit to screen internet media before it reaches users in Sudan. It is frequently used to block pornographic sites.

Earlier that day Sudanese media reported that on 24 June, Badr al-Din Ibrahim, spokesperson of the ruling National Congress Party, had accused websites of launching a campaign to distort the Sudan's image in collaboration with the political opposition and the USA.

"Blocking *Hurriyat*'s website is part of a systematic attempt by the Sudanese regime to stop news about anti-government demonstrations reaching the Sudanese people and the world at large," stated Elhag Warrag, chief editor of *Hurriyat Sudan*.

Warrag established *Hurriyat* ("Freedoms") in 2010 as an online newspaper because restrictions by the Sudanese government on the media had made it impossible to report freely from inside Sudan. In 2012 Warrag and Abdelmonim Suleiman, managing editor, were awarded an Oxfam Novib/PEN Award recognising writers who have been persecuted for their work and continue working despite the consequences.