

Student protests erupt in Khartoum and other Sudanese towns
By Sudan Tribune
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(KHARTOUM) – Sporadic demonstrations erupted on Sunday in Sudan's capital Khartoum as well as other parts of the country in protests against rising costs of living, drawing the usual violent response from police forces.

Protesters on the streets of Khartoum in January 2012 (ST)Eye witnesses told Sudan Tribune that students from the University of Khartoum (UoK) took to the streets on Sunday chanting slogans calling for the downfall of the government before they were forced to retreat to the campus after the police confronted them with batons and heavy tear gas.

According to the witnesses, tension is still high in and around the area where UoK is located in down town Khartoum.

Similar student protests took place on the same day at Shendi University in the Nile River State and the eastern town of Kassala.

A number of citizens also tried to stage a protest in the main bus station in Khartoum but the police managed to disperse them.

Khartoum police, since Saturday, meant to surround the universities and were deployed in the down town area to stop any attempts to mobilize on the streets.

Sudan has largely escaped the contagion of popular uprisings that swept across the Middle East, but the continued worsening of economic conditions is threatening increased dissent.

The Sudanese police announced in a short communiqué released on Sunday evening the arrest of seven people after a "limited student protest" at the education faculty UoK.

The police further urged the Sudanese not to follow troublemakers and rumor mongers who "aim to destabilize the security".

The opposition National Consensus Forces (NCF) called on the Sudanese, through telephone text messages (SMS), to wear textile bracelets for three days to express their rejection of the increased prices.

The opposition alliance further called for a campaign of sit-ins and civil disobedience throughout the country against the regime.

The NCF leadership organized a symbolic sit-in last Tuesday in the Sudanese capital to show their opposition to the increase of fuel prices, which is to be decided among other austerity measures.

The protests come ahead of plans by the government to end fuel subsidies as part of what officials describe as drastic austerity measures needed to fill a budget gap of \$2.4 billion USD.

Sudan's economy has been grappling with soaring inflation and a depreciating currency since the country lost three quarters of its oil production with the secession of South Sudan in July last year.

Inflation jumped to 30 percent in May, mainly on food prices, as the Sudanese pound continues to reach new lows on the black market for hard currency.

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