



## **Time for genuine reform of Sudanese security laws**

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The Project for Criminal Law Reform in Sudan (PCLRS)\*\* today released a report entitled 'Security for All – Reforming Sudan's National Security Law.' The report contains specific suggestions for legal reform and a set of recommendations drawing on national and international standards and comparative experiences. The full report is available in at <http://www.pclrs.org/Resources/Security%20for%20all%20FinalENG.pdf#>

Over the last two decades, the Sudanese security services have been vested with extraordinarily wide powers. Members of the security services have enjoyed virtual impunity even though they have been implicated in human rights violations.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) requires the parties to enact a new security law. This reform is key to strengthening the rule of law and providing greater human rights protection. Dr. Omar Mohamed Salih, the spokesperson of the Council of Ministers, stated that the proposed law will provide safeguards for arrested and detained persons. This is a welcome step but it falls short of genuine reform because it indicates that the services will retain executive powers.

As long as these powers of arrest and detention remain, there will be no true reform of the security services. Envisaged safeguards against abuse do not reach far enough and may in any case not be adequate in practice.

Abdelsalam Hassan, Sudan Legal Advisor, at REDRESS concludes that "it is imperative that the Sudanese security service does not have policing powers. The Interim National Constitution provides that the National Security Service shall be 'professional' and its mandate shall focus on information gathering, analysis and provision of advice to the appropriate authorities. Avoiding arrests and other policing powers is consistent with the interim constitution and with lessons learnt from best practices around the world to limit the risk of abuse."

Reforming the security services is also a vital prerequisite for free and fair elections in 2010.

According to Nabil Adeeb, a senior lawyer and expert on national security legislation “It is hard to see how an electoral contest worthy of its name can take place when politicians, journalists, rights activists and others live in constant fear of a security service that can basically do what they want to you.”

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\*\*The initiative for criminal law reform in Sudan (PCLRS) [www.pclrs.org](http://www.pclrs.org) is a joint project by SORD and REDRESS

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