

CPJ condemns censorship of Sudanese paper

NEW YORK: The Committee to Protect Journalists has condemned a decision by the Security and National Intelligence Service to bar publication of the daily *Al-Intibaha*. Authorities suspended the newspaper last week because of the newspaper's supposed role "in strengthening separatist tendencies in the south and the north," a security official told local reporters.

The suspension stemmed from a July 4 article by editor-in-chief El-Tayeb Mustafa that criticised Libyan involvement in Darfur and the role Muammar Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, plays in hosting a Sudanese rebel group in Libya, according to news reports.

The newspaper's editorial stance supports the separation between the northern and southern Sudan, CPJ research shows.

"This suspension is clearly intended to silence any potential critics ahead of next year's referendum," said CPJ deputy director Robert Mahoney.

"The authorities should immediately lift the suspension and allow public debate on this issue."

The Security and National Intelligence Service informed the newspaper by phone that it would be suspended "indefinitely" and that its July 6 edition was being confiscated. The newspaper did not receive any written notice, according to a statement published on *Al-Intibaha* website.

The newspaper plans to appeal the action to the country's constitutional court, Mustafa said at a news conference in Khartoum last week. He said the intelligence and security forces have no legal authority to suspend a newspaper. It can be only done by a court order. Article 39 of the Sudanese Constitution guarantees freedom of the press.

The atmosphere in Sudan is heated ahead of a referendum scheduled for January 2011 that will determine whether the south will separate from the rest of the country. Sudanese authorities have intensified a crackdown on journalists and critical newspapers in recent months as a result.

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