

## Sudan Breaks Up Dam Demo

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December 20, 2011 (KHARTOUM) – Sudanese anti-riot police on Tuesday forcibly dispersed and arrested protestors demonstrating in downtown Khartoum against the construction of a dam upcountry, eye witnesses told Sudan Tribune.

A good number of youths affiliated to Al-Manasir tribal community of northern Sudan on Tuesday thronged the main bus station in central Khartoum and demonstrated against the government's failure to compensate their communities for the damage of their properties due to the construction of the Chinese-built Merowe Dam on the Fourth cataract of the River Nile, 350 kilometers north of Khartoum.

The protest comes one month after thousands of Al-Manasir members began a sit-in around local authorities' office in the town of El Damer in the Nile River State in northern Sudan to protest against the dam. The vigil suffered a similar crackdown when four students were arrested.

The protestors, who chanted slogans demanding compensation for Al-Manasir, were later joined by dozens of street vendors and everyone eventually ended up calling for the downfall of president Omer Al-Bashir's government, according to witnesses.

The witnesses further reported that units of anti-riot police swept in and fired teargas on the protestors and arrested around ten of them.

The construction of Merowe dam, which was financed by China, the Arab Fund for Social & Economical Development, the Saudi Fund for Development and other Arab funds at a cost of more than 2 billion US dollars, has displaced more than 100,000 local persons belonging to three riverian communities, Al Hamdab, Amri and Al-Manasir.

According to Al-Manseer community leaders, 90% of the compensation due to those who lost their land to the dam's reservoir has not been paid despite government's promises to do so.

Local opposition to Meroew dam began in 2003 when its construction started. In 2006, a militia linked to the Merowe Dam Implementation Unit (MDIU) attacked a peaceful protest by local communities with live ammunitions, killing three people on the spot and injuring more than forty.

According to Sudanese and International Human Rights Organisations the Merowe Dam project has been marred by massive human rights abuses since its inception. Members of the affected communities have been subjected to detention, torture, injury, and killings.

In a desperate call to the government to resolve the problems caused by the construction of the dam and to stop violence against the population of the affected area, a prominent local leader regretted in a statement to Manasir Network that the authorities negotiate only to with those who hold arms against the government.

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