

Sudanese police in second crackdown against dam protesters

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December 22, 2011 (KHARTOUM) – The Sudanese capital Khartoum has witnessed a second round of demonstrations against a government dam project upcountry as President Omer Al-Bashir pledged to find a quick solution to the issue.

Anti-riot police forces on Thursday fired teargas and used batons to disperse a protest staged in downtown Khartoum by dozens of students affiliated to, or acting in solidarity with, Al-Manasir, one of three tribal populations which incurred severe losses of properties due to the construction of Merowe Dam in their homelands on the Fourth cataract of the River Nile, 350 kilometers north of Khartoum.

A similar crackdown was meted out earlier on Tuesday against Al-Manasir demonstrators in downtown Khartoum, leading to the arrest of around ten protesters.

Thursday's protest moved to the University of Khartoum where several other students joined the protesters, eyewitnesses told *Sudan Tribune*.

Around 300 students marched out of Khartoum University's main campus, chanting slogans denouncing president Al-Bashir.

Police forces then arrived at the scene and clashed with the protesters, firing tear gas and chasing them inside the campus. Dozens were arrested, according to the witnesses.

The police also dispersed another protest staged later in the evening by female students affiliated to Al-Manasir. The students had earlier blocked the road in front of their house near Khartoum University and chanted slogans calling for overthrowing the government.

These protests came one month after Al-Manasir started a sit-in in El Damer town in the Nile River State to protest against the government's failure to compensate them for the damage of their properties.

Meanwhile, president Al-Bashir held a meeting with the Nile River State's governor Al-Hadi Abdallah and discussed Al-Manasir issue. The governor told reporters following the meeting that Al-Bashir had promised resolve the issue "within days" and declared his intention to visit the state in mid-January.

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.

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.

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