

IFJ condemns harassment against female journalist in Sudan

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), earlier this week, condemned the charges brought by Sudanese authorities against Amal Habani, a female journalist and editor of the column "Tiny Issues" in *Ajrass Al Horreya* newspaper for having denounced the prosecution of Sudanese women who wear trousers.

"This is a blatant violation of freedom of expression. Our colleague just expressed a candid opinion in her column," said Gabriel Baglo, director of the IFJ Africa Office. "These charges are nothing more than harassment and must be dropped."

Amal Habani published an article on 12 July 2009, entitled "Lubna, a case of subduing a woman's body," in which she asserted that Lubna's case is not about public decency but rather a political tactic to intimidate and terrorise opponents of the general discipline law which is most oppressive to women.

Lubna Al Hussein, a female journalist working for United Nations Mission in Sudan and for *Al Sahafa* newspaper, was accused of "sensational dressing up" for wearing trousers. The general discipline police considered Lubna's dressing to be a threat to the values of the Sudanese society. The punishment for this offence is to be whipped 40 times in public, as per article 152 of the Sudanese criminal law of 1991.

While covering the trial, the Sudanese police detained reporters and correspondents and confiscated the notebooks and recorders of some of them.

Amal was questioned by the press and publication prosecution authorities on 20 July on the basis of Article 159 of the criminal law regarding defamation. The general discipline police authority requested a fine of 10 million Sudanese pounds (US\$4,100,000) to be paid by Amal.

IFJ has called on Sudanese authorities to put an end to the threats and harassment against all journalists reporting on human rights particularly on women's rights and for press freedom and freedom of expression to become a reality in the country.