

Sudan police arrest women protesting at flogging video

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KHARTOUM (Reuters) - Sudanese police arrested dozens of women protesting on Tuesday against laws they say humiliate women after a video of a woman being flogged in public appeared on the Internet.

Floggings carried out under Islamic law are almost a daily punishment in Sudan for crimes ranging from drinking alcohol to adultery.

But vague laws on women's dress and behaviour are implemented inconsistently. One case sparked international furore when Lubna Hussein, a Sudanese U.N. official, invited journalists to her public flogging for wearing trousers.

The video, which was removed by YouTube, showed a crying Sudanese woman being lashed by two policemen in front of onlookers in a public place. She was made to kneel and the police laughed during the punishment.

"Humiliating your women is humiliating all your people," the women shouted as they were being arrested on Tuesday.

Around 50 women sat down outside the justice ministry holding banners and surrounded by riot police telling them to move.

Three plain-clothed security men threw the BBC correspondent to the ground, confiscating his equipment.

All the women were arrested and taken to a nearby police station. Their lawyers were prevented from entering, but senior opposition politicians were allowed to go inside.

The women said they had tried to get permission for the protest but had been refused. The police declined to comment.

"The authorities here take the law into their own hands. No one knows what happens inside these police stations," said one of their lawyers, Mona el-Tijani. "This video was just one example of what happens all the time."

Sudan's justice ministry said it would investigate whether the punishment was administered properly.

It was not clear what offence the woman being lashed had committed. Officials from the ruling National Congress Party offered conflicting explanations in the local press.

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