

Sudan doubles minimum wage

KHARTOUM, SUDAN: Sudan's cash-starved government on Sunday (30 December) ordered a doubling of the minimum wage after months of rising prices left consumers struggling to make ends meet.

The order by President Omar al-Bashir reversed earlier official rejections of an increase despite inflation which reached 46% in November.

"President Bashir has given a directive for increasing the minimum wage to 425 pounds (about US\$61 on the black market) as of January 1," the official *SUNA* news agency said in a brief dispatch.

The new figure is roughly double the current minimum wage.

Almost 47% of Sudanese lived below the poverty line in 2010, the United Nations said, but the country has descended into economic crisis since July last year when South Sudan broke away taking with it roughly 75% of the oil production in the formerly united country.

Inflation has risen and the value of the Sudanese pound has dropped to record lows as the lost crude accounted for most of Khartoum's export earnings and half of its fiscal revenues.

In June and July anti-inflation protests erupted around the country, with Arab Spring-inspired calls for the overthrow of Bashir's 23-year rule.

The scattered demonstrations petered out in the face of a security clampdown.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge