

# 32 oil workers arrested after protest in Sudan's Upper Nile

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November 20, 2007 (MALUT, Sudan) – Local authorities in Upper Nile state arrested thirty-two workers of the Petrodar Oil Company operating in Malut County after a protest they organised against what they described "mistreatment" by the multinational oil firm.



*Petrodar workers*

Three representatives of the casual workers told Sudan Radio Service (SRS) by phone that they demonstrated early on Friday 16 November morning, alleging that they have not been paid for four months. They also complained that they are working under harsh conditions, including verbal and physical harassment from their supervisors.

The representatives also said that Petrodar's workers are Sudanese from all over southern Sudan, plus a few from Darfur and Blue Nile. They claim that county authorities resent their presence, which has also led to discrimination against them by the local community, the Nairobi based SRS reported from Malut.

They claim that 400 casual workers at Petrodar's concession blocks 3 and 7 took part in the protests. They said that the workers blocked a road, hoping to stop an oil company official so they could make their demands. However, according to Malut County Commissioner Thon Juac, the workers were violent, beating people along the road, particularly those appearing to be of Arab origins.

Joint Integrated Unit soldiers were called in to break up the protest. According to the workers' representatives, the soldiers began shooting, injuring two workers. Juac denied any shooting.

As the protest broke up and workers fled the scene, the soldiers managed to detain 32.

The workers, who asked that their names not be revealed, claim that the arrested were severely beaten by county authorities over the weekend, an allegation the county commissioner says is not true. Those arrested remain in detention.

Malut commissioner also denied the charge that the workers face discrimination. He said neither the oil company nor the local community has any problem with workers coming from other parts of Sudan.

He further said that the demonstration was broken up because it was illegal and said that no protesters were injured. He praised the JIU soldiers, saying they helped restore order. The workers are now calling on the Government of Southern Sudan to intervene and investigate the incident.

Petrodar is a multinational joint venture, incorporated under the laws of the British Virgin Islands on 31st October 2001, its majority-owned by Chinese and Malaysian companies. China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC.YY) owns 41% in the venture, Malaysia's Petrolia National Berhad (PET.YY), 40%, Sudan-owned Sudapet Ltd., 8%, and China Petroleum & Chemical Corp. (0386.HK), 6%. While the African Arabian Petroleum Ltd (AAP), an oil and gas unit of Dubai-based Thani Investments, owns 5% in the project and is one of its joint-operators.