Activists: 5 Killed in Protests Against Sudan’s President

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By AP

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Security forces killed at least five protesters in fresh anti-government marches on Saturday in Sudan, in what organizers said was among the largest turnouts in three months.

The demonstrations began in December over price hikes and food shortages, and quickly escalated into calls for President Omar al-Bashir's resignation, posing one of the biggest challenges yet to his nearly 30-year rule.

Security forces have responded to the protest movement with a fierce crackdown, killing at least 60 people according to Physicians for Human Rights, a New York-based rights group. The latest deaths raised the tally to at least 65 since protests began.

The government has said that 32 people have been killed, but hasn't updated its tally in weeks.

The rallies are being led by the Sudanese Professionals Association, an umbrella group of independent professional unions.

Sarah Abdel-Jaleel, a spokeswoman for the SPA, told The Associated Press that four people were killed in the capital city of Khartoum and another protester was killed in the neighboring city of Omdurman.

Stone-throwing protesters clashed with security forces using tear gas, live ammunition and batons to disperse tens of thousands of people gathered outside the military's headquarters and a presidential residence in Khartoum, according to the organizers.

The Sudan Doctors Committee, an SPA affiliate, said that dozens had been wounded in rallies across the country, many of them by live ammunition.

The state-run SUNA news agency on Saturday quoted police spokesman General Hashim Abdel-Rahim as saying that one person was killed "during disturbances in Omdurman." He called the protests "illegal gatherings."

Al-Bashir has offered little in the way of concessions, beyond calling for a national dialogue and asking parliament to postpone constitutional amendments that would allow him to seek a new term in next year's elections.