

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 54/05/96

UA 43/96

Fear of Torture / Possible Prisoners of Conscience

22 February 1996

SUDANal-Sir Mekki Abu Zeid, former teacher
Hassabu Ibrahim, farmer and trade unionist
Walid Abu Seif, businessman
Ahmad al-Tom

Security officers in Sudan's capital Khartoum are reported to have arrested the four men named above in the first week of February 1996. The men have a history of trade union and political activism and are reported to be members of the Alliance of National Democratic Forces, a broad left-wing group originally formed by former members of the Sudan Communist Party. The men, who are being held in detention without charge or trial in an unknown location, are reported to be suspected by the authorities of being actively involved in opposition political activities. Amnesty International believes that they may be prisoners of conscience, arrested for their non-violent political opposition to the government, and fears that they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

BACKGROUND

Political prisoners are held in Sudan on the basis of Constitutional Decree Two of 30 June 1989 which establishes a State of Emergency. The decree bans "the showing of political opposition by any means to the regime of the Revolution for National Salvation".

The Sudan Government has announced that there will be presidential and parliamentary elections in March 1996. Forty-eight men are reported to have registered as presidential candidates. However, political parties remain banned and leading members of the political opposition have declared that they will not participate in the polls.

Anyone detained by the Sudanese security authorities is at risk of ill-treatment, in particular those held in secret detention centres known as "ghost houses". Those whom the authorities suspect may have information about opposition activities are at particular risk of torture. In March 1995 one of the most notorious "ghost houses" was partially closed and its inmates transferred to a section of the main prison in Khartoum, still under the supervision of the security authorities but reportedly in better conditions. However, it is known that other "ghost houses" still exist.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the detention without charge or trial in early February 1996 of al-Sir Mekki Abu Zeid, Hassabu Ibrahim, Walid Abu Seif and Ahmad al-Tom, whom Amnesty International believes may be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned on account of their non-violent opposition to government policies;
- seeking assurances that they are not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment and urging that their whereabouts in custody be made public and that they are granted immediate and regular access to their families, legal counsel and any necessary medical attention;
- urging that they be released immediately unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought promptly to a fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

1) His Excellency Lieutenant-General

Omar Hassan al-Bashir

President of the Republic of the Sudan

People's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Lt Gen Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Khartoum, Sudan**Telexes: 22411 KAID SD****Salutation: Your Excellency**

2) Brigadier Bakri Hassan Saleh

Minister of the Interior

People's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Minister of the Interior Bakri Hassan Saleh,**Khartoum, Sudan****Telexes: 22842 WZARA SD or 22604 IPOL SD****Salutation: Dear Minister**

3) Mr Ali Osman Mohamed Taha

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PO Box 873

Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, Khartoum, Sudan**Telexes: 22461 KHRJA SD****Salutation: Dear Minister****COPIES TO:**

Mr 'Abd al-Aziz Shiddo

Minister of Justice and Attorney-General

Ministry of Justice, Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Obeid Haj Ali

Chief Justice

Law Courts

Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Angelo Beda Bambara

Chairman of the Human Rights Committee

of the Transitional National Assembly (TNA)*

Omdurman, Sudan

and to diplomatic representatives of Sudan accredited to your country.

* The TNA's Human Rights Committee was created by Sudan's government-appointed Transitional National Assembly in December 1992, apparently to counter what the government perceives as hostile human rights propaganda. The Committee's Chairman has said that it investigates reports of human rights violations. However, Amnesty International has received no information which suggests that this takes place in an effective or systematic manner.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 April 1996.