

EXTERNAL

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Prisoner of Conscience / Fear of Torture

28 January 1997

SUDAN Samira Hassan Ali Karrar (f), human rights activist

Samira Hassan Ali Karrar, a prominent human rights activist arrested on 25 January 1997, is being detained without charge in Omdurman Women's Prison, the main women's prison in Sudan. Amnesty International believes that she is a prisoner of conscience, and fears that she may be at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Three days prior to her arrest, members of the security service visited her house and left a message ordering her to report to them. She refused to do so. Her husband, retired Brigadier Sharif Muzamil Ali Dinar, was also arrested with Samira Hassan Ali Karrar, but was released without charge after a few hours.

Samira Hassan Ali Karrar is part of a group of relatives of 28 army officers who were summarily executed by the Sudanese authorities on 24 April 1990, the 28th day of Ramadan. Her brother, Lieutenant Colonel `Abd al-Moneim Hassan Ali Karrar was one of those executed. The relatives call themselves "families of the martyrs". They have held frequent meetings and demonstrations to commemorate the dead men and to protest against their execution. As a result, they have been regularly harassed and frequently detained. It is thought that Samira Hassan Ali Karrar may have been detained by the Sudanese authorities as a warning to the relatives not to attempt to hold a demonstration on the seventh anniversary of the executions, which falls on the 28th day of Ramadan in 1997, 6 February.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Samira Hassan Ali Karrar has been briefly detained several times in the past in connection with other activities organized by the relatives to commemorate the 28 men summarily executed. She has never been charged with a recognizably criminal offence by the Sudanese authorities.

Her arrest comes at a time when the political atmosphere in Sudan has become increasingly tense. On 12 January 1997, armed forces belonging to the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA) cooperated with the primarily southern armed opposition group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, to capture the northern Sudanese border town of Kurmuk. The Sudanese government has accused the Eritrean and Ethiopian government of supporting the rebel offensive. Both have denied that they are doing so. Fighting is reported to be continuing.

Anyone detained by the Sudanese security authorities is at risk of ill-treatment and torture, in particular during interrogation in security offices. In the past the authorities have blamed torture and ill-treatment on undisciplined security officials. Amnesty International's information, however, is that torture and ill-treatment in security force custody are systematic.

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

- expressing deep concern at the arrest of Samira Hassan Ali Karrar, who Amnesty International believes is a prisoner of conscience, detained on account of her peaceful human rights activities;
- seeking assurances that she is not being tortured or ill-treated;
- urging that she be immediately and unconditionally released.

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
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Mr 'Abd al-Basit Sabdarat
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Ministry of Justice
Khartoum, Sudan
Telegrams: Minister of Justice 'Abd al-Basit Sabdarat, Khartoum, Sudan
Telexes: c/o 22411 KAID 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
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1) Mr Obeid Haj Ali
Chief Justice
Supreme Court
Khartoum, Sudan

2) Mr Ahmad al-Mufti
Secretary
Advisory Council for Human Rights
PO Box 302
Khartoum, Sudan

and to diplomatic representatives of Sudan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 March 1997.