

UA 320/00

Fear of t**SUDANOsman Idris Abo Rass, Deputy Secretary of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party
Hassan Ahmed Hassan Basheer**

A leading member of a banned political party has been arrested, together with another man, and both are believed to be at risk of torture. They are reportedly held without access to their lawyers, families or medical treatment.

Osman Idris Abo Rass is the Deputy Secretary of the banned Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party. He was in Hassan Ahmed Hassan Basheer's office in the capital, Khartoum, when the two men were arrested on 4 October. They are now believed to be held in Kober Prison in Khartoum.

It is not clear why they were arrested, but it is thought that the security forces were looking for the editors of the underground newspaper *Al-Hadaf*, which is linked to the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party. Shortly before the arrests, some newspapers referred to articles in *Al-Hadaf* that had criticised the government.

A few days after they were arrested, 10 prominent Sudanese lawyers signed a public appeal, calling for lawyers to be allowed to meet with them and for them to be released.

Members of the banned Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party have been targets of the government in the past. Osman Idris Abo Rass has been arrested several times for political reasons, together with other party members (see UA 40/97, 4 February 1997).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since President Omar Hassan al-Bashir came to power in 1989, political opposition and freedom of expression have been severely curtailed in Sudan. There has been a pattern of torture and illegal secret detention of suspected government opponents. Despite the new Political Act, which came into force on 1 January 1999, opposition parties and trade unions not linked to the government are not allowed genuine political freedom. In December 1999, President Bashir announced a State of Emergency, which he extended in March 2000 until the end of this year. Under the new Security Act and the new Law against Terrorism, security officers are allowed to keep people in detention for up to 63 hours before they are charged. People charged with 'terrorism', which is open to interpretation by the authorities, face amputation, the death penalty or life imprisonment

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the two men named above, who are detained without charge or trial;
- seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated and confirmation that they are held in Kober prison in Khartoum;
- urging that they be given immediate and regular access to their families, legal representatives and any necessary medical attention;
- appealing for them to be released immediately and unconditionally if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought promptly to trial.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Lieutenant Omar Hassan al-Bashir
President of the Republic of Sudan
People's Palace
PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 24911 787676/783223
Telegrams: President Bashir, Khartoum, Sudan
Salutation:Your Excellency

Mr Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Ministry of Justice
Khartoum, Sudan
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Khartoum, Sudan
Salutation:Dear Minister

Mr Mustafa Osman Ismail
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 873, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: +24911 779383
Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Khartoum, Sudan
Salutation:Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Dr Ahmad al-Mufti
Advisory Council for Human Rights
PO Box 302
Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 24911 779173

Mr Hafez al-Sheikh al-Zaki
Chief Justice, Supreme Court
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 30 November 2000.