

UA 67/97 Possible prisoners of conscience / Fear of torture 12 March 1997

SUDAN
Imad al-Amin, graduate
Isam al-Shubagi, student
Omar Mohamed Ali, student
Usama Siddig Yousif, student
Ali Mohamed Osman al-Simat, student
Yasir Abdel Hamid, student
Tariq Abdel Hamid, student
Mohamed Taj al-Sir, student
Mamoun Karrar, student
Atif Hassan, student
Mohamed Farouq, student
al-Nomoman al-Sair, student
Usama Said, student

Amnesty International has received reports that the 13 young men named above, all recent or current university students, were arrested in Khartoum in mid-February 1997 and are detained without charge or trial in a security service-run section of Kober Prison. The young men are reported to have reputations as political activists in the student body opposed to the government of President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir. Amnesty International fears that the 13 are at risk of torture and ill-treatment and is concerned that they may be prisoners of conscience.

At least two of the students, Usama Siddig Yousif, a student at Ahlia University in Omdurman, and Mohamed Farouq, a student at the University of Khartoum, have been detained on several previous occasions. Usama Siddig Yousif, for example, was arrested in early September 1995 and detained without charge or trial until January 1996.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Some 500 alleged political opponents of the government are reported to have been detained without charge or trial since the beginning of 1997. The majority of those detained appear to be members of banned political parties and trade unions.

The political atmosphere in Sudan has become tense since 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 on 12 January 1997. The Sudanese government has accused the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments of supporting the rebel offensive. Both have denied that they are doing so.

Following the capture of Kurmuk, the authorities closed the universities and called a general mobilization. In early March the army began to round up men between the ages of 18 and 25 for military service by stopping vehicles in the streets of the capital and ordering men of military age to report for service.

The speaker of the Sudanese parliament, Dr Hassan al-Turabi, is reported to have indicated on the 29 January that arrests had taken place to maintain law and order. He also stated that those detained might be released once government forces had retaken territory occupied by opposition forces in the north of the country.

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 Arabic, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the detention without charge of the above men, who may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned for their suspected opposition to the Sudan Government;
- seeking assurances that the detainees are not being tortured or ill-treated;
- 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 if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences 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
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 23 April 1997.