

UA 255/98 Incommunicado detention without charge or trial/
Fear of torture

24 September 1998

UGANDA/USASheikh Abduwel Abdullah Amin, imam of Tawhud mosque, Kampala
Omar Ahmed Mandela, treasurer SC Villa football club
Hussein Abdul Mumir
Muhammed Diriya
Mohamed Gulam Kabba, former manager Alero Resource Centre,
in Adjumani
Hassan Noor
Ali Mahmood
Asuman Mahmood
Hassan, 15-years-old
Mohamed Rashid Asuman
Salah
and at least seven others whose names are not yet known

On 15 September 1998, the men named above -- and at least seven others whose names are not yet known by Amnesty International -- were arrested at various places in Kampala. Other men are reported to have been arrested in the eastern Ugandan town of Tororo. Their place of detention has not been traced, despite repeated efforts by journalists and families. All are being held without charge, contrary to Uganda's constitution and laws. Amnesty International is deeply concerned by their incommunicado detention and is also concerned that they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

The arrests were made by the Ugandan Anti-Terrorism Squad, a special unit of police and security officers, working in conjunction with officials from the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) deployed in Uganda in the wake of the bombing of the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 7 August 1998. US and Ugandan security officials are reported to suspect that an attack against the US Embassy in Kampala had also been planned. In the weeks that followed, a number of bomb threats were made against the US and other embassies in Kampala. On 18 September an unnamed US official speaking in Washington DC is reported to have told journalists that the men were preparing an attack against American interests in Uganda.

All the persons arrested are believed to be Muslims. Most are Ugandans of Somali origin. Mohamed Rashid Asuman and a man known only as Salah are Kenyans of Somali origin. Another man, Mohamed Gulam Kabba, is a Ugandan aid-worker who has worked extensively with southern Sudanese refugees. In December 1997, he visited Somalia on an official invitation from UNESCO.

Over the past year the authorities in southern and western Uganda have detained without charge or trial a number of Muslims, apparently on suspicion of links with the Allied Democratic Front (ADF), an armed opposition group operating mainly in Bundibugyo and Kasese Districts in western Uganda from bases in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Ugandan authorities have accused the Sudan Government of arming the ADF. The ADF is thought to have been behind a series of bomb and grenade attacks in Kampala. The most recent attacks were on 25 August in which bombs exploded on three buses leaving the city, killing 28 people.

There are reports that at least 12 other detainees arrested in Kampala on suspicion of security-related issues have been tortured in unofficial places of detention, giving rise to concern about the well-being of the men named

above. Detainees arrested in early August, held incommunicado and released on 11 September, have reported being whipped with electrical cable and beaten with iron bars. They were questioned about links with the Sudan Embassy in Nairobi and membership of the ADF.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Whatever the reasons for the men's detention, Ugandan law states that they be held for no more than 48 hours before being charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought before a court. This is the second case in recent weeks involving Ugandan and US security personnel working together in which basic legal and human rights provisions have been ignored. On 15 August 1998, Asghar Pishdar, an Iranian asylum-seeker, was arrested at Entebbe airport by US and Ugandan personnel as he tried to board a flight to Europe. He is also being held in incommunicado detention in an unknown place (see Extra 59/98, AFR 59/02/98). The US authorities have not commented on the arrest of Asgha Pishdar.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of the men named above, and at least seven others arrested with them, whose whereabouts remain unknown following their arrest in Kampala on 15 September 1998;
- seeking assurances that they are not being ill-treated;
- expressing concern that they have been detained without charge or trial for a period exceeding 48 hours in contravention of Ugandan law;
- urging that they be given immediate and regular access to family members, a lawyer of their choice, and any necessary medical attention;
- requesting that they be released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought promptly to trial.

APPEALS TO (Please note: fax tones in Uganda may be difficult to obtain):

Major Tom Butime, Minister of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, PO Box 7191, Kampala, UGANDA

Telegrams: Minister Internal Affairs, Kampala, Uganda

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Eriya Kategaya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs PO Box 7048, Kampala, UGANDA

Telegrams: Minister Foreign Affairs

Faxes: + 256 41 232874

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr Philip Idro, Director, Internal Security Organization, Office of the President, PO Box 7168, Kampala, UGANDA

Faxes: + 256 41 235459

Telexes: 61048 RESIST / 61389 KAPITAL

When copying to the US authorities please add a covering letter:

- expressing concern at reports of FBI involvement in the arrest and subsequent detention without charge or trial of the detainees mentioned above.

The Honorable Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State, Office of the Secretary of State, 2201 C Street, N.W., Washington DC 20520, USA

Faxes: + 1 202 647 1533

Salutation: Dear Secretary of State

The Honorable William Cohen, Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington
DC 20301-1155, USA

Faxes: + 1 703 697 9080

Salutation: Dear Secretary of Defense

Louis J Freeh, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Ninth Street and
Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC, 20535, USA

and to diplomatic representatives of Uganda and USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 November 1998.