

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 54/015/2002

UA 231/02 Fear of torture/ Incommunicado detention/

24 July 2002
Medical concern

SUDAN Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman (m),
26 others, names unknown

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman and 26 others, currently detained incommunicado, and fears that they may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman was arrested on 9 July in the capital Khartoum by the security services. There are reports that he may be detained in a place known as "the Executive Body of General Security", close to the Security Headquarters in Khartoum East. Twenty-six other people were allegedly arrested around the same time in the cities of Kabkabia and El Fasher in Darfur, Western Sudan. They were allegedly transferred to Port-Sudan, in the eastern part of the country.

At the time of his arrest, Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman was undergoing medical treatment for severe back pain at the Amal Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Physical and Mental Trauma, a centre which provides medical treatment to victims of torture in Khartoum. He was reportedly tortured by the security services after his arrest in 1997.

In 1997, Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman was reportedly a member of the Sudan National Alliance, a political party in coalition at the time with the opposition Sudan Alliance Forces (SAF), based in Eritrea. He was released at the end of 1999 following a partial amnesty for political prisoners by President Omar al-Bashir.

None of those arrested have been charged, and the reason for their arrest is unclear. However, Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman was arrested after spending the period between February to early June visiting the Dinka areas in northern Bahr-El-Ghazal. These are mostly controlled by the Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the main armed opposition group in southern Sudan; Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman reportedly met local SPLA leaders during his visit. Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman is said to follow closely a local reconciliation initiative in Southern Darfur aimed at engaging dialogue between Rizeigat and Dinka ethnic groups, and ending the conflict between them. The arrest of 26 people in Darfur is allegedly connected to that of Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is a pattern of incommunicado detention and torture of suspected government opponents by the security services in Sudan. People belonging to opposition political parties are particularly at risk, as well as those who are suspected of having links with the SPLA, which has been at war with the central government for more than 19 years. Most opposition parties are based outside Sudan, and those who remain inside are not allowed to carry out their political activities openly.

Serious human rights violations have taken place for many years in the contested areas between Southern Darfur and northern Bahr-El-Ghazal. In particular, this has included the abduction and enslavement of civilians of Dinka ethnicity by armed groups of Rizeigat and Misserya communities, who are part of the Baggara ethnic group. While the government has portrayed this conflict as a "tribal" one, mostly due to traditional customs of abductions and conflict over land and resources, human rights and humanitarian organizations have denounced the

role of the government in supporting and arming the Baggara as an auxiliary militia, also called "murahleen", in its fight against the SPLA. The government has been accused of condoning the abductions and subsequent enslavement of thousands of Dinka women and children, by the Baggara in villages located along the railway line linking Babanusa to Wau. Following pressure by the international community, a governmental committee called the Committee on Eradication of Abductions of Women and Children (CEAWC) was established in 1999. A recent report commissioned by the United States, as part of its involvement in peace efforts in Sudan, also denounced the link between the government and the Baggara and hinted at local reconciliation initiatives as part of a resolution of the issue of slavery.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or Arabic or your own language:

- expressing your deep concern at the incommunicado detention of Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman and 26 others;
- seeking firm assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to immediately reveal their place of detention and to allow them immediate and unrestricted access to their relatives, legal counsel and any medical aid they may need;
- expressing particular concern about the health of Salah Mohamed Abdelrahman, underlining that he had already been tortured before, and urging that he receives adequate medical treatment while in detention;
- calling on the authorities to release the 27 men immediately, unless they are promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought promptly to justice, according to international standards of fairness and without resorting to the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Lieutenant General Omar Hassan al-Bashir
 President of the Republic of Sudan
 President's Palace
 PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Telegrams: President al-Bashir, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 24911 771651
Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin
 Minister of Justice and Attorney General
 Ministry of Justice
 Khartoum, Sudan
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 24911 788941/773693
Salutation: Dear Minister

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

Dr Ahmed al-Mufti

Advisory Council for Human Rights
PO Box 302
Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 24911 770883
Salutation: Dear Dr al-Mufti

COPIES TO:

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 4 September 2002.