

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 54/08/97

UA 40/97 Fear of torture / Possible prisoners of
conscience / Health concern

4 February 1997

**SUDAN Abdel Moneim Ahmad al-Haj, member of the Communist Party
Osman Idris Abu Ras, member of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party
Mohammed Dia, member of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party
Ishaq Ibrahim, member of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party
al-Tijani Hussein Daffala al-Sid, poet and member of the Ba'ath
Arab Socialist Party**

Amnesty International has received reports that the five men named above are among the scores of alleged government opponents who were arbitrarily arrested in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, during January 1997. They are being detained without charge or trial in Khartoum. It is not known where they are being held, but they may be in a security service-run section of Kober Prison. Amnesty International fears that the five men are at risk of torture and ill-treatment and is concerned that they may be prisoners of conscience.

Abdel Moneim Ahmad al-Haj was arrested on 19 January 1997. In addition to being a member of the Communist Party, he is also General Secretary of the banned Bank Employees' Union. He suffers from a gastric ulcer. Amnesty International is concerned that he may be being denied access to medical treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At least 79 alleged political opponents are known by Amnesty International to have been detained without charge or trial since the beginning of 1997 (see UA 08/97, AFR 54/01/97; UA 13/97, AFR 54/02/97; UA 20/97, AFR 54/05/97; UA 21/97, AFR 54/06/97; UA 23/97, AFR 54/05/97). However, the organization believes that the total number of those arrested is much higher. The majority of those detained appear to be members of banned political parties and trade unions.

The political atmosphere in Sudan has become increasingly 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. Fighting is reported to be continuing.

A Reuters report on 29 January 1997 reported that the speaker of the Sudanese parliament, Dr Hassan al-Turabi, had claimed in an interview on the same day that at most 15 members of the *Umma* Party and the Democratic Unionist Party had been recently detained. He stated that the arrests took 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. However, in the same interview, Dr Hassan al-Turabi hinted that senior leaders of opposition parties may be put on trial on treason-related charges.

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 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 25 March 1997.