Fear of torture \ Possible prisoner of conscience

SUDAN

Sara Nugdallah (f), university lecturer and women's activist

Sara Nugdallah is reported to have been detained in Sudan's capital Khartoum in late May as part of a crackdown on the leadership of the Ansar, a traditional order of Sudanese Islam, and the banned Umma party, which is an associated political party. Amnesty International is concerned that she may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment and that she may be a prisoner of conscience. It is not clear where she is being held.

A member of the Umma Party's executive and women's committees, Sarah Nugdallah is an outspoken critic of the military government which seized power in a coup in 1989 and has been repeatedly detained. Her current detention appears to be connected to the arrest, on 16 May, of Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Ansar order, leader of the banned opposition Umma party and Sudan's Prime Minister overthrown in the 1989 coup (see UA 119/95 (AFR 54/15/95, 25 May 1995). While the authorities have not yet indicated why Sara Nugdallah has been detained they are reported to have announced that Sadiq al-Mahdi is "being interrogated for involvement in subversive activities". The authorities have given contradictory information about these alleged activities; some spokesmen are reported to have accused Sadiq al-Mahdi and the Umma Party of working with the armed opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army. There are reports that other leaders of the Ansar order and Umma Party have also been detained.

Independent sources have said that Sadiq al-Mahdi's arrest appears to be a reaction to an outspoken speech he made criticizing the legitimacy of Sudan's current rulers on the occasion of the Muslim feast of 'Eid al-Addha on 10 May. The military government, which espouses a radical Islamist ideology, is deeply sensitive to opposition from other interpretations of Islam.

The repeated harassment and arrest of Sara Nugdallah is described in an Amnesty International document (AFR 54/44/94) giving cases for appeals as part of the organization's current campaign against human rights abuses in Sudan.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express/airmail letters either in English, Arabic or in your own language:
- expressing concern at the arrest of Sara Nugdallah, who Amnesty International believes may be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned on account of her non-violent opposition to government policies;
- seeking assurances of her physical safety and guarantees that she is not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- urging that she be immediately and unconditionally released unless she is charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought promptly to a fair trial;
- calling on the Sudan Government to put a stop to arbitrary detention without charge and to the torture and ill-treatment of individuals suspected of being government opponents.

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
Telexes: 22385 PEFLC SD or 22411 KAID SD
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Dr al-Tayib Ibrahim Mohamed Kheir
Minister of the Interior
People's Palace
PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Telegrams: Minister of the Interior Dr al-Tayib Ibrahim Mohamed Kheir, Khartoum, Sudan
Telexes: 22842 WZARA 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
Telexes: 22459 KHRJA SD or 22461 KHRJA SD
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr 'Abd al-Aziz Shiddo
Minister of Justice and Attorney-General
Ministry of Justice, Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Obeid Haj Ali
Chief Justice
Law Courts
Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Angelo Beda Bambara
Chairman of the Human Rights Committee
of the Transitional National Assembly (TNA)*
Omdurman, Sudan

* The TNA's Human Rights Committee was created by Sudan's government-appointed Transitional National Assembly in December 1992, apparently to counter what the government perceives as hostile human rights propaganda. The Committee's Chairman has said that it investigates reports of human rights violations 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 15 July 1995.