

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 33/93 Fear of torture/legal concern

10 February 1993

SUDAN: Mohamed Abdulsid, journalist

Amnesty International is concerned at the arrest and for the safety of Mohamed Abdulsid, the Khartoum correspondent of the international Arabic language daily newspaper Asharq al-Awsat. He was arrested on 28 January 1993 by security officials in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and is believed to be held in incommunicado detention. His place of detention remains unknown but is thought to be either the security headquarters in Khartoum or a secret detention centre, known as a "ghost house" in Sudan.

Asharq al-Awsat has consistently carried stories quoting Sudanese political leaders in opposition to the government of Major General Hassan Omar al-Bashir, who came to power in a military coup on 30 June 1989. In addition to arresting Mohamed Abdulsid, the government has closed down the newspaper's offices in Khartoum. This follows periodic complaints from the government accusing the newspaper of bias in its reporting.

Mohamed Abdulsid is thought to have particularly annoyed the government by recently holding a lengthy interview with Sadiq al-Mahdi who is the leader of the Umma Party, one of Sudan's two major political parties, and was prime minister of Sudan between 1986 and 1989.¹ The interview was subsequently published in Asharq al-Awsat. Amnesty International believes he has been arrested solely because he has engaged in his internationally recognized fundamental right to freedom of expression in the course of his professional work as a journalist. The organization considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture and ill-treatment are routine in both the security headquarters and "ghost houses". The worst torture is inflicted during interrogation. For example, prisoners interrogated in late 1991 in connection with an alleged coup attempt were seriously tortured. An elderly prisoner was bound and suspended by his wrists from the walls of his cell on three consecutive nights. Another prisoner is reported to have had the flesh of his heels sliced off. In other cases there have been reports of prisoners being subjected to electric shocks, being whipped, having their testicles crushed with pliers and being burnt by hot irons.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English, Arabic or your own language:

¹ All political parties are banned in Sudan.

- expressing concern at the arrest on 28 January 1993 of Mohamed Abdulsid who appears to Amnesty International to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely because of exercising his internationally recognised right to freedom of expression;

- expressing concern at his continuing incommunicado detention without charge or trial and expressing fear that he is being tortured;

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- urging that he not be subjected to torture; that his whereabouts in custody be made public and that he be given immediate and regular access to his family, lawyer and any necessary medical attention;

- urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released.

APPEALS TO

1) His Excellency Lieutenant General Omar Hassan al-Bashir
Head of State and Chairman of the National Salvation Revolutionary Command
Council

People's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Lt Gen Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Khartoum, Sudan

Telexes: 22385 PEPLC SD or 22411 KAID SD

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Brigadier-General al-Zubeir Mohamed Saleh
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior
and Deputy Chairman of the National Salvation Revolutionary Command Council
People's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Brig-Gen al-Zubeir Mohamed Saleh, Khartoum, Sudan

Telexes: 22842 WZARA SD or 22604 IPOL SD

Salutation: Your Excellency

3) Mr Abdullah Idris
Minister of Justice and Attorney-General
Ministry of Justice
Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Minister of Justice Abdullah Idris, Khartoum, Sudan

Telexes: 22459 KHRJA SD or

22461 KHRJA SD (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

1) Mr Jalal Ali Lutfi
Chief Justice
Law Courts
Khartoum

Sudan

2) Mr Ali Sahloul
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 873
Khartoum, Sudan
3) Dr A. al-Mufti
Secretary of Human Rights Commission*
Khartoum, Sudan

* The Human Rights Commission is a government-backed body, nominally independent, apparently created to counter what the government perceives as hostile human rights propaganda.

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 24 March 1993.