

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

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**UA 113/92 Legal concern/Fear of torture**

**6 April 1992**

**SUDAN:       Father Constantino Pitia - Roman Catholic Priest  
              Father Nicholas Abdallah - Roman Catholic Priest  
              and over 60 school students**

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Father Constantino Pitia and Father Nicholas Abdallah, both Roman Catholic priests, were arrested by security officials around 10 March 1992 in Juba in southern Sudan. They were flown almost immediately to Khartoum where they currently remain in detention in an unknown place. The authorities have not provided official reasons for their arrest. However, it is thought that they are suspected of instigating demonstrations in Juba, protesting at the Arabicization of the education system in southern Sudan and at the arrest of school students trying to flee Juba, which is besieged by the opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The arrest of the two priests was followed by demonstrations in protest. Amnesty International regards them as prisoners of conscience, arrested for non-violently exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression.

Since November 1991, at least 62 school students have been arrested as they tried to leave Juba in search of education in areas controlled by the SPLA or in neighbouring countries. In January 1992, 62 students were moved from the military barracks in Juba to a police station. Their current situation is unknown. It is reported that they were ill-treated while in military custody.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In November 1991 the government announced that schools in southern Sudan were to have Arabic rather than English as their language of instruction. The issue of Arabic as the language for teaching in secondary and higher education is politically sensitive in Sudan. Historically, English is the language of government in southern Sudan and is the medium of instruction in most southern educational institutions. Tuition in English is regarded by many southern Sudanese intellectuals as protecting their cultural identity in relation to Muslim northern Sudan. Steps to Arabicize the educational system started in 1991 when the government announced that all school-leavers seeking university places would be required to pass an examination in Arabic. Since 1972, southerners had been exempted from this requirement. Southern leaders have argued that the requirement discriminates against southern students gaining university places, even at Juba University, which was set up as a university in the southern Sudan, but which is now located in Khartoum because of the war.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern at the arrest of Father Constantino Pitia and Father

Nicholas Abdallah whom Amnesty International regards as prisoners of conscience arrested for non-violently exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression;

- expressing concern at their continuing incommunicado detention without charge or trial and fear that they may be being tortured;
- urging that Father Constantino Pitia and Father Nicholas Abdallah be immediately and unconditionally released;

**page 2 of UA 113/92...**

- expressing concern at the arrest of at least 62 school students trying to leave Juba who, in January 1992, were in detention in a police station in the town;
- urging that the school students be immediately and unconditionally released unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and promptly and fairly tried;
- seeking assurances that the priests and the students are being humanely treated, that their whereabouts in custody are made public and that they have immediate and regular access to their families, lawyers and any necessary medical attention.

**APPEALS TO:**

1. His Excellency Lieutenant General  
Omar Hassan al-Bashir  
Head of State and Chairman of the NSRCC  
People's Palace  
PO Box 281  
Khartoum, Sudan

**Telegrams: Lt Gen Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Khartoum, Sudan**  
**Telex: 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 NSRCC  
People's Palace  
PO Box 281  
Khartoum, Sudan

**Telegrams: Brig-Gen al-Zubeir Mohamed Saleh, Khartoum, Sudan**  
**Telex: 22842 WZARA SD or 22604 IPOL SD**  
**[Salutation: Dear Brigadier-General]**

3. Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney-General  
Ministry of Justice  
Khartoum, Sudan

**Telexes: 22459 KHRJA SD or 22461 KHRJA SD**  
**(via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**[Salutation: Dear Minister]**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Mr Jalal Ali Lutfi  
Chief Justice  
Law Courts  
Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Ali Sahloul  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
PO BOX 873  
Khartoum, Sudan

and to diplomatic representatives of Sudan in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 May 1992.