

UA 61/01

Fear of torture or ill-treatment / incommunicado**SUDAN** **Dr Nageeb Nagmeldin el Toum, Director of the Amal Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Physical and Mental Trauma**

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A prominent human rights defender, Dr Nageeb Nagmeldin el Toum, is being held in Kober prison, Khartoum, without access to his family, legal representatives and medical attention. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience and fears that he may be tortured or ill-treated.

The security forces arrested Dr Nageeb Nagmeldin el Toum, the director of the Amal Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Physical and Mental Trauma, on 11 March. He was initially held at the security force offices in Khartoum, before being transferred to Kober prison on 12 March. He has not been charged, and it is not known why he was arrested. However, he had been due to meet the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Sudan, Mr Gerhard Baum, on 13 March, two days after his arrest.

A former secretary of the banned Sudanese Doctors' Union, Dr Nageeb has been detained by security forces on a number of occasions since 1989. He has previously been held incommunicado and was reportedly tortured in custody. He is in poor health.

The Amal Centre, which was opened in November 2000, provides free medical treatment and counseling for victims of human rights abuses. The Centre is the first of its kind to be established in Sudan. Two other staff members at the centre, administrator Fatih Mohamed Ahmed Abdel Rahman and secretary Zienab Omer Ahmed, were also arrested on 11 March and interrogated. Although subsequently released from detention, they have since been subject to further interrogation. At the time of the arrests, the security forces confiscated computers, patient files and other documents belonging to the centre. They returned the following day to confiscate medical equipment, a generator and office furniture, even though they reportedly did not have a warrant.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since President al-Bashir came to power in 1989, political opposition and freedom of expression and association have been severely curtailed in Sudan. Although a 1999 political act supposedly relaxed the ban on opposition political parties, opposition parties and trade unions not linked to the government are still denied genuine political freedom. In the past, there has been a pattern of human rights abuses against those who oppose the government, including lawyers, journalists, trade unionists and human rights defenders. Those who criticize the government remain at risk of illegal secret detention and torture or ill-treatment.

Since his re-election on 29 December 2000, President al-Bashir has extended the State of Emergency declared in December 1999 until the end of 2001.

Under the *National Security Act and Law against Terrorism*, the security forces can keep people in detention for up to 63 hours before they are charged. The act was recently amended and detainees' right to challenge detentions of less than 93 days through the courts was reportedly removed. At the discretion of the authorities, this period can be renewed for a further three months. This means, in effect, that detainees can be held for an indefinite period of time without charge.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Dr Nageeb Nagmeldin el Toum;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that he is not tortured or ill- treated in custody;
- calling for him to be granted immediate access to his family, legal representatives and any medical attention he may need;
- calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of workers at the Amal Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Physical and Mental Trauma, and to ensure that they are not detained or interrogated;
- expressing concern that doctor/patient confidentiality is respected;
- seeking assurances that patients of the Centre will not be subject to harassment, arrest or interrogation.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Lieutenant General Omar Hassan al-Bashir  
 President of the Republic of Sudan  
 People's Palace  
 PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan  
**Fax: + 24911 787676/783223**  
**President al-Bashir, Khartoum, Sudan**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Mr Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin  
 Minister of Justice and Attorney General  
 Ministry of Justice  
 Khartoum, Sudan  
**Justice Minister, Khartoum, Sudan**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Mr Mustafa Osman Ismail  
 Minister of Foreign Affairs  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 PO Box 873, Khartoum, Sudan  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES 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 26 April 2001.