

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 141/94 (AFR 54/12/94, 8 April 1994) - Prisoners of conscience / fear of torture

SUDAN Mahjoub Mohamed al-Hassan Erwa, journalist and editor
 Ahmad Ali Bagadi, journalist - released
 Mutwakil Abdel Daff'eh, journalist - released

Amnesty International has received news that two of the journalists working for the daily newspaper *al-Sudani al-Doulia* who were arrested on 4 April 1994 for allegedly spreading "false news", were released on 18 April.

Mahjoub Mohamed al-Hassan Erwa, however, remains in detention and still reportedly faces charges under Section 66 of the Penal Code which provides for prison sentences of up to six months. His whereabouts are unknown, but it is likely that he is being detained at the security headquarters in Khartoum.

Amnesty International believes that Mahjoub Mohamed al-Hassan Erwa, who is a member of the Transitional National Assembly, Sudan's government-appointed parliament, is a prisoner of conscience, arrested because of his activities as a journalist. The organization fears that he may be at risk of torture while in detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrests and the closure of the newspaper followed the publication of articles in *al-Sudani al-Doulia* which argued for a return to multi-party politics in Sudan and which made allegations of governmental corruption. The government has also accused the paper, in a strongly worded presidential statement issued on 4 April, of "raising doubts about the purpose and struggle of the armed forces and People's Defence Forces" and of having the aim of "destroying the revolution".

In June 1993 the government announced that after four years of state monopoly of the press, the government was to allow independent newspapers. *Al-Sudani al-Doulia*, which had previously been published in Beirut, began publication in Sudan in January 1994. The government appears to have expected a compliant press produced by people broadly supporting its political agenda and has reacted aggressively to critical articles.

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

- welcoming the release on 18 April 1994 of Ahmad Ali Bagadi and Mutwakil Abdel Daff'eh;
- expressing concern at the continued incommunicado detention of Mahjoub Mohamed al-Hassan Erwa, who Amnesty International believes is a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for exercising his internationally recognised right to freedom of expression and association;
- seeking assurances that he is not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment and urging that his whereabouts in custody be made public and that he is granted immediate and regular access to his family, legal counsel and any necessary medical attention;
- urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released.

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 PEPLC SD or 22411 KAID SD

Faxes: 249 11 71724

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Brigadier-Engineer 'Abd al-Rahim Muhammad Husayn

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior

People's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Brig-Engineer 'Abd al-Rahim Muhammed Husayn, Khartoum, Sudan

Telexes: 22842 WZARA SD or 22604 IPOL SD

Faxes: 249 11 71724/76554/73046/70186

Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister

3) Mr 'Abd al-Aziz Shiddu

Minister of Justice and Attorney-General

Ministry of Justice, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Mr 'Abd al-Aziz Shiddu, Khartoum, Sudan

Telexes: 22459 KHRJA SD or 22461 KHRJA SD (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Faxes: 249 11 74063

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr Jalal Ali Lutfi

Chief Justice

Law Courts

Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Hussein Suleiman Abu Salih

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PO Box 873

Khartoum, Sudan

Dr A. al-Mufti

Secretary of Human Rights Commission*

Khartoum, Sudan

* The Human Rights Commission is a government-backed body, nominally independent, but 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 30 May 1994.