

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Prisoners of Conscience / fear of torture

18 May 1994

SUDAN

Baha' Zaki
Ashraf Adli
Magdi Chelata

The three Egyptian aid workers named above, working on an education program run by the Roman Catholic Church of Khartoum, were arrested on 18 April 1994.

The government is reported to have accused them of irregularities in their legal and tax status, but other reports claim that their arrest represents an attempt by the authorities to harass Christian church staff involved in relief and development work with people living in squatter camps around Khartoum. Amnesty International is concerned that they may be prisoners of conscience, arrested because of their work for the Roman Catholic Church of Sudan. Their current whereabouts are unknown and there are fears that the three may be at risk of torture while in detention.

The day after their arrest, Kamal Tadros, an Egyptian Catholic deacon who is managing the education project, was also arrested. He was held in detention for around one week before being released.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are around 1.75 million people displaced by war and famine in northern Sudan, a sizeable proportion of whom live in squatter camps on the outskirts of Khartoum after having fled the civil war which began in 1983.

Many different charities, both Muslim and Christian as well as secular organizations, are involved in voluntary work in these squatter camps, including the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Khartoum which runs a program providing education for children of displaced families from southern Sudan.

The government of Sudan, which came to power in a military coup on 30 June 1989, professes an Islamist ideology. A sizeable proportion of the population, however, is non-Muslim. In the southern Sudan, in particular, the Christian faith is the majority religion. Many non-Muslims argue that the government's measures to Islamicize Sudanese society, which include Shari'a (Islamic) law, represent discrimination against them. In addition, church groups claim that, despite formal protestations of religious tolerance, the authorities regularly put obstacles in the way of non-Islamic groups seeking to carry out relief and development work within displaced camps.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest on 18 April 1994 of Baha' Zaki, Ashraf Adli, Magdi Chelata, who Amnesty International is concerned may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of their work for a Christian organization, in violation of their internationally recognised right to freedom of religion;
- expressing concern that they may be being subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- urging that their whereabouts in custody be made public and that they be granted immediate and regular access to their families (if in Sudan), employers, legal counsel and any necessary medical attention;
- urging that they be immediately and unconditionally released unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought promptly

to a fair trial.

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
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
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)
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 29 June 1994.