

URGENT ACTION

DOCTORS DETAINED, RISK TORTURE

Six doctors have been arrested for their activities as members of a committee calling for better pay and working conditions for doctors in Sudan: they are prisoners of conscience. They are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Doctors Alhadi Bahkit and Walla Aldin are members of the Doctors' Strike Committee organising strike action to demand improvement of their salaries and working conditions. They were arrested on 1 June by officers of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS). The men were held for three hours, during which, according to sources in Sudan, they were severely beaten. Dr Alhadi Bahkit was rearrested shortly afterwards, and has been detained without charge ever since. His family were able to visit him on 7 June. He apparently seems in poor health.

The president of the doctors' committee, Dr Ahmed Alabwabi, was also arrested on 1 June, and has been detained without charge since then.

On 2 June the NISS attacked doctors and medical students from the University of Khartoum protesting against the detention of the members of the Doctors' Strike Committee, badly injuring several of them.

Four more doctors have since been arrested. Ashraf Hammad was reportedly arrested on 2 June, Mahmoud Khairallah on 6 June, Abdelaziz Ali Jamee on 7 June, and Ahmed Abdallah Khalafallah in the evening on 8 June. They have all been detained without charge since then.

NISS agents have apparently been looking for members of the Doctors' Strike Committee, as well as journalists reporting on their cases, forcing them to go into hiding.

Sudan's 2010 National Security Act provides NISS agents with extensive powers of arrest and detention. Detainees can be held for up to four-and-a-half months without judicial review and NISS agents have immunity from prosecution for any human rights violations carried out as part of their work.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Dr Alhadi Bahkit, Dr Ahmed Alabwabi, Dr Ashraf Hammad, Dr Mahmoud Khairallah, Dr Abdelaziz Ali Jamee, and Dr Ahmed Abdallah Khalafallah immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on them to provide all six doctors with any medical attention they may require;
- Calling on them to reform the 2010 National Security Act to remove the excessive powers of the NISS, in particular powers of arrest and detention without judicial oversight for four-and-a-half months.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JULY 2010 TO:

President

HE President Omar Al Bashir
Office of the President
People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum
Sudan

Fax: +249 183 774 339

Salutation: Your Excellency

NISS director

Mohamed Atta Al-Moula Abbas
Director of the NISS
NISS Headquarters
Khartoum, Sudan

Salutation: Dear Director Abbas

And copies to:

Dr Abdelmuneim Osman Mohamed
Taha
Advisory Council on Human Rights
PO Box 302
Khartoum
Sudan

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A committee of doctors was first formed in 2003, to improve the working conditions of doctors in Sudan. Following a three-day strike in 2003, the government accepted a 12-point agreement with the committee, which included a salary increase.

After delays in the implementation of the salary increase and the rest of the agreement, another strike, organised by the new Doctors' Strike Committee, was held on 1-3 February 2010.

After further delay, the committee arranged a 17-day strike which began in March and continued into April, which the police responded to with frequent harassment of the doctors. The doctors ended the strike when the Ministry of Health agreed to implement the 2003 agreement and increase salaries.

The Ministry of Health withdrew the agreement on 15 May and reduced the salary increase. The doctors' committee called a meeting on 2 June to decide how to proceed. Three doctors had been arrested the previous day.

Police prevented many doctors from entering the building where the meeting was due to take place. The doctors moved the meeting to a nearby building, but the NISS told them to leave, and beat many of them as they were leaving.

Medical students from the University of Khartoum led a peaceful march in support of the doctors' committee. Many of the students were also beaten by NISS officers.

One of the changes that were dictated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government of Sudan and armed opposition groups from southern Sudan, was the reform of the 1999 National Security Forces Act which provided NISS agents with extensive powers of arrest and detention, leading to human rights violations such as arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment. The 2010 National Security Act was adopted to reform the 1999 National Security Forces Act, yet retained the same powers of arrest and detention for NISS agents.

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