

URGENT ACTION

HIGH-PROFILE SUDANESE ACTIVIST RELEASED

Magdi Aqasha, leader of the prominent Sudanese activist group (Youth for Change), was released on 2 July following detention in offices of the National Security Services (NSS), during which he was beaten and otherwise ill-treated. He faces criminal charges in relation to his activism, but is now free.

Magdi Aqasha was arrested on 24 June 2012 after he was involved in a traffic accident with a motorcyclist from the National Security Services (NSS) who was monitoring his movements. On 27 June 2012, Magdi Aqasha was charged with attempted murder and resisting arrest, then transferred to the NSS office on Nile street in Sudan's capital Khartoum.

During his detention, Magdi Aqasha was repeatedly slapped and beaten with sticks, made to sit under the scorching sun for long hours, deprived of sleep, and threatened with death. He was released on 2 July but was requested to report to NSS offices daily. On 5 July, he refused to go.

The Criminal Court of Khartoum summoned Magdi Aqasha to a hearing, but the NSS officer who had raised charges against him did not attend. As a result, the hearing was postponed until 29 July. Magdi Aqasha continues to face charges, but he is now free.

Magdi Aqasha and his family expressed his gratitude to Amnesty International and all those who took action for him. Amnesty International will monitor developments and issue calls to action as appropriate. No further action is needed for the time being.

This is the first update of UA 183/12. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR54/027/2012/en>



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Demonstrations broke out in Khartoum University on 17 June after President Omar al-Bashir announced that subsidies on fuel and basic food provisions would be lifted in response to the government's fiscal crisis. The protests triggered a wider movement of daily demonstrations in Khartoum, its suburbs, and provincial capitals.

The authorities responded with excessive force. The police used batons, tear gas and rubber-coated bullets against peaceful protesters. In addition, the NSS embarked on a wide, systematic crackdown on civil society, arresting hundreds of individuals – not only demonstrators but also hundreds of opposition party members, youth activists, lawyers, journalists and NGO representatives.

In some cases, the detainees have been released without charge after a few hours. In others, they have been taken to unofficial places of detention where they have been tortured including beatings using fists, wooden sticks and metal bars. Individuals arrested for their involvement in demonstrations have also been charged with 'troubling public order' and sentenced to fines or lashing, which amounts to torture or other ill-treatment or punishment.

Name: Magdi Aqasha

Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 183/12 Index: AFR 54/030/2012 Issue Date: 10 July 2012