

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/ Fear of torture and ill-treatment

23 July 2003

SUDAN

**Bahar El Din Shibou (m) Director of a primary school in Tina
Hamid Adam Hassan Abdelrahman (m) student**

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of Bahar El Din Shibou and Hamid Adam Hassan Abdelrahman, following their arrest by government soldiers. They were reportedly last seen being transferred by helicopter to an unknown location, where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Bahar El Din Shibou was reportedly arrested on 11 or 12 July, at a primary school in the town of Tina, North Darfur, which is on the border with Chad. It is not known when Hamid Adam Hassan Abdelrahman was arrested, nor is it known exactly why the two men were detained. However, they may have been arrested because the Sudanese army suspects them of having links with the armed opposition group the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A).

The SLM/A has been operating in Darfur, western Sudan, since February 2003. Tina had already been attacked by the SLM/A at the end of March. Between 11 and 15 July, fighting between the Sudanese government and the SLM/A took place in Tina, and it would appear that the SLM/A is currently in control of the town. Thousands of civilians have reportedly fled to Chad, because of the fighting, which allegedly included government bombings of the town.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The SLM/A, which was formed by sedentary groups in Darfur, says it is fighting the government because of the underdevelopment and marginalization of the region. It also accuses the government of failing to protect sedentary groups from attacks by nomads. Cattle and camel herders have attacked farming communities such as the Fur, Zaghawa and Masaleit for several years, over scarce water resources and pasture. Dozens of villagers have been killed in such attacks.

At the end of March 2003, the government decided to respond by military force to this new armed group. The SLM/A attacked El-Fashir on 24 April and Mellit, a district capital in North Darfur on 11 May, but the government retook control of the two cities. Civilians are reportedly not allowed to move freely in the area, use satellite telephones or four wheel drive vehicles. It is extremely difficult to get information about the situation of civilians in these areas. On 28 April, Amnesty International called for an international commission of inquiry into the deteriorating situation in Darfur and for human rights monitors to be sent into the region. None of these have happened so far.

Incommunicado detention by the government security forces has been used extensively, including in Darfur, to detain suspected government critics and, since February 2003, civilians suspected to support the SLM/A. People in the region also allege that those of Fur and Zaghawa ethnicity are increasingly arrested because they are of the same ethnic group as members of the SLM/A. According to the National Security Forces Act, the security forces can detain people incommunicado without charge for up to nine months, which can then be renewed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Bahar El Din Shibou and Hamid Adam Hassan Abdelrahman, who were reportedly arrested by government soldiers;
- urging the Sudanese authorities to immediately reveal their whereabouts and allow them access to relatives, lawyers and any medical aid they may need;

-calling on the Sudanese authorities to give assurances that the men will not be tortured or ill-treated while detained;
-asking for both men to be immediately released, unless they are charged with a recognizable criminal offence and promptly brought to justice in proceedings which respect all international standards of fairness, and without resorting to the death penalty;
-calling on the Sudanese authorities to stop the detention without charge or trial of civilians in Darfur.

APPEALS TO:

Mr Ali Osman Mohamed Taha
First Vice-President
People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan

Telegram: First Vice-President, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: + 249 11 771651 / 779977

Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Ministry of Justice
Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: + 249 11 771479

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Mustafa Osman Ismail
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 873
Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: + 249 11 779383

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Osman Mohamed Yusif Kubor
Governor of North Darfur
People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Governor of North Darfur, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: + 249 731 42696

Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Dr Yasir Sid Ahmed
Advisory Council for Human Rights
PO Box 302
Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: +249 11 779173/770883

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 3 September 2003.