

PUBLIC

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Fear of Torture

07 January 2004

SUDAN

Adib Abdel Rahman Yusuf (m), aged 30, teacher
Sa'id Imam al-Haj (m), aged 35, teacher
Ibrahim Osman (m), aged 36, merchant
Arbab Abdel Mawla (m), aged 34, teacher
Abboud Khamis (m), teacher

The five men named above, all from the Fur ethnic group, were arrested on 2 January 2004 on suspicion of belonging to the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA). They are held incommunicado and without charge at the security forces offices in Zalingei, where they are at risk of torture.

Adib Abdel Rahman Yusuf, Sa'id Imam al-Haj, Ibrahim Osman and Arbab Abdel Mawla were arrested at the local market in Zalingei in West Darfur. Adib Abdel Rahman Yusuf and Sa'id Imam al-Haj are believed to be members of the Communist Party, though the political affiliation of the other detainees is not known.

National security forces in Darfur are reported to have routinely used torture, including beatings and electric shocks, against suspected members and supporters of the SLA. Detainees have reported being held for months in appalling, overcrowded conditions in security detention centres, with little food and no access to the outside world.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past few years hundreds of civilians in Darfur, mostly from agricultural ethnic groups like the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa, have been killed or wounded. Their homes have been burnt and herds looted by armed nomadic groups. The SLA took up arms against the government in February 2003, because of what it perceives as the lack of government protection for its people and the marginalisation and underdevelopment of the region. Since then the number of attacks by armed groups aligned with the government has greatly increased. More than 700,000 people have fled from their burnt villages and most have taken refuge in towns in Darfur, while more than 90,000 have crossed the border into Chad.

Over the past month there have been scores of arrests of people from the Darfur region. They are apparently suspected of contacts with the armed opposition in the region. Those arrested have been held under Article 31 of the National Security Forces Act, which allows detention for up to nine months without access to judicial review.

Many of those detained in Darfur before September 2003 were released under the terms of a ceasefire between the SLA and the government, which was sponsored by the Chadian authorities. However on 17 December 2003, negotiations in Chad to end the conflict in Darfur collapsed. Since then, the local authorities have imposed a curfew in El Fashir, Nyala and Geneina, the capitals of North, South and West Darfur where dozens of people have reportedly been arrested.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the five men named above who are detained incommunicado and without charge in Darfur;
- calling on the authorities to give assurances that they will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- calling on the government to allow them immediate access to their families, legal counsel and any medical care they may need;
- calling on the government to amend Article 31 of the National Security Forces Act that allows the security forces to detain people without charge for up to nine months;

- calling on the government to abide by its commitments under Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and either charge them with a recognizably criminal offence and bring them to justice in accordance with international standards for fair trials, or release them immediately;
- calling on the Sudanese government not to respond to the conflict in Darfur by violating international human rights and humanitarian law.

APPEALS TO:

First Vice-President

Mr Ali Osman Mohamed Taha
People's Palace, PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegram: **First Vice-President, Khartoum, Sudan**

Fax: **+ 249 11 771025**

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Mr Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin
Ministry of Justice, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: **Justice Minister, Khartoum, Sudan**

Salutation: **Dear Minister**

Governor of West Darfur State

Major-General Suleiman Abdalla Adam

People's Palace
PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: **Governor of West Darfur, Khartoum, Sudan**

Fax: **+ 249 11 771 024**

Salutation: **Dear Sir**

COPIES TO:

Chair of the Human Rights Committee

Dr Hamadtu Mukhtar
National Assembly

Fax: **+ 249 15 560 950**

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 18 February 2004.