

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 54/18/97

UA 385/97 Fear for safety / Ill-treatment / Flogging

8 December 1997

SUDANThirty-eight women, including:

Fatima Kamal Mohamed Kheir
Zeinab Ali al-Omda Abdelmajid
Widad Mohamed
Omyma Ahmad Mustafa
Salwa Said
Zahra Mohamed Ahmad Fadil
Entessar Siddig
Amal Osman
Setena Mohamed Salih
Sakhena Abdallah Kambal
Hayat Mahmud
Nejla Ahmad
Seham Adam
Asma al-Sayid Ali
Huda Ahmad Abdalla
Kossar Hassan Mohamed
Amani Ahmad Osman
Ibtehaj Ibrahim
Sara Gassim al-Sayid
Lillian Mohamed Salih Hussein
Bakheita Ahmad al-Sheikh
Eyman Abdelrahim
Eyman Mohamed al-Hussein
Rana Mohamed Ahmad
Najala Saad Ahmad al-Sheikh
Hadi al-Rayid al-Mahi
Samira Talib Ismail
Neimat Ahmad Malik
Sara Hamid al-Nil
Sara Nugdullah
Souad Ibrahim Ahmad
Samia Ahmad Osman
Samira Osman Hamid
al-Khansa Omar Suraldahab

Following ill-treatment against a large group of women protestors arrested on 1 December 1997 in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, Amnesty International fears that they and others remain at risk of further human rights violations as they continue their campaign against the conscription of school leavers into the armed forces.

The women named above were among 38 arrested around midday on 1 December as they held a peaceful demonstration protesting at the conscription of secondary school-leavers, and sought to hand over a petition to Christoph Jaeger, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Resident Representative in Khartoum. Security agents waiting at the locked doors of the UN offices broke up the demonstration by beating women with sticks, rubber hosepipes and fists.

At approximately 10.30pm that evening, 37 women were taken to a Public Order Court where they were summarily convicted of causing a disturbance, obstructing traffic and demonstrating without permission. All 37 were sentenced to a fine of £s10,000. Twenty-four were sentenced to 10 lashes each. One, Lillian Mohamed

Salih Hussein, was sentenced to a further 30 lashes for wearing inappropriate dress (loose trousers and a shirt).

The lashes were administered a few hours later, without the women being allowed to appeal against their conviction. Women remand prisoners held on suspicion of brewing or selling alcohol were made to carry out the flogging. The fines were paid immediately by supporters who gathered outside the court and the women were freed.

Amnesty International is concerned that the women were arrested for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly, that they were beaten, and that they were subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The women were protesting at the conscription of secondary school-leavers into the armed forces. The authorities have reportedly announced that henceforth children can only collect their Sudan School Certificate (final school exam) results after they have reported for military service. Without exam results children are unable to proceed to tertiary education. Making the children report to the army to collect their results ensures that the authorities are able to enlist them.

Suspecting that security officials might seek to disrupt their demonstration, the women sent a small delegation to the offices of the UN in advance of the main march. They handed over the petition to a UN official. When the main march arrived at the UN building about two hours later, it is reported that the doors were locked and that government security agents were waiting for them.

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

- protesting at the arrest of 38 women, who Amnesty International considers to have been prisoners of conscience during the brief period they were held, for peacefully expressing their opposition to conscription;
- expressing concern that the women were beaten;
- expressing concern that they were flogged, a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- urging that any further peaceful protests be allowed to go ahead without fear of arrest or ill-treatment, rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- urging that the authorities remove cruel, inhuman and degrading penalties from the penal code.

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: President, Khartoum, Sudan

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Mr 'Abd al-Basit Sabdarat
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Ministry of Justice
Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Jusice Minister, Khartoum, Sudan
Telexes: c/o 22411 KAID SD or 22604 IPOL SD
Salutation: Dear Minister

3) Mr Ali Osman Mohamed Taha
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 873
Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Khartoum, Sudan
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1) Mr Obeid Haj Ali
Chief Justice
Supreme Court
Khartoum, Sudan

2) Mr Ahmad al-Mufti
Secretary
Advisory Council for Human Rights
PO Box 302
Khartoum, Sudan

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 25 January 1998.