

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 54/22/96

UA 221/96 Torture / Fear of torture /
Possible prisoners of conscience

19 September 1996

SUDANAbualabbas Dai al-Naim, lawyer
Khalid al-Mahi, lawyer

Muataz Hasaan, businessman
Adil Ibrahim Karrar, businessman
Ismail Azhari
al-Tayib 'Abd al-Kafi
al-Jalli, businessman
Zohair, medical doctor

The above-named men were arrested in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, on or around 4 September 1996. None have been brought to a court or charged. They are reportedly being held incommunicado in a Sudan Security-run section of Kober prison, Sudan's main prison in Khartoum North. There are reports that some of the detainees, notably lawyers Khalid al-Mahi (a supporter of the banned Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party) and Abualabbas Dai al-Naim (a supporter of the banned Umma party), have been tortured. Amnesty International fears that all eight are at continuing risk of torture and ill-treatment and is concerned that they may be prisoners of conscience.

The arrests are part of a round-up of suspected government opponents following riots in Khartoum and its twin city Omdurman on 1 and 2 September. At least two people were shot dead by security police during the demonstrations. The riots, the latest in a series of popular protests in various cities in Sudan since June, broke out after bakeries refused to bake bread, on the grounds that new government regulations on the weight and price of loaves made baking unprofitable.

It is thought that the detainees are being held to reduce any influence they may have as political opponents at a time when the government is facing growing unrest. They are not believed to have been involved in street demonstrations.

Nine men arrested around the same time have been released. However, at least one, lawyer Mahmud al-Shazli, is being made to spend each day in the offices of Sudan Security, a form of treatment which Amnesty International regards as *de facto* detention. This is becoming a common way of harassing suspected political opponents of the government: Adil Ibrahim Karrar (a supporter of the banned Sudan Communist Party), who was released in August after three months in detention, was being made to report daily at the time of his re-arrest in September.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Anyone detained by the Sudanese security authorities is at risk of ill-treatment and torture, in particular those held in secret detention centres known as "ghost houses" in Sudan. In a disturbing development, the torture of Khalid al-Mahi and Abualabbas Dai al-Naim is reported to have taken place in the security-run section of Kober prison. This is the first report of torture in Kober since Sudan Security took over part of the prison in March 1995. In the past the authorities have blamed torture and ill-treatment on undisciplined security officials. Amnesty International's information, however, is that torture and ill-treatment are systematic.

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

- expressing concern at the detention without charge of the above men, who may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned for their suspected opposition to the Sudan Government;
- expressing deep concern at the reported torture of Khalid al-Mahi and Abualabbas Dai al-Naim;
- asking assurances that the detainees are not being tortured and ill-treated;
- urging that they be given immediate and regular access to their families, legal representatives and any necessary medical attention;
- appealing for them to be released if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and brought promptly to a fair trial.

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: Lt Gen Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Khartoum, Sudan
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Mr 'Abd al-Basit Sabdarat
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Ministry of Justice
Khartoum, Sudan
Telegrams: Minister of Justice 'Abd al-Basit Sabdarat, 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 Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, 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 2 November 1996.