

UA 222/95 Possible Prisoners of Conscience/Fear of Torture 18 September 1995

SUDAN Abdel Bagi Mandela, student
Ibrahim Fateh al-Rahman, agriculturalist
Mudathir 'Abd al-Rasikh, student
Muhi al-Din al-Galad, engineer
'Abd al-Rahman Ali al-Bashir, student
Adlan Ahmad Abdelaziz, teacher
Awad Bashir, arts graduate
 Mohaid Mohamed Ahmad Siddiq, postgraduate student
 Lenin al-Tayib, graduate
 Mohamed al-Mustapha, graduate
 Muataz Abdallah, student
 Yasir Mohamed Ali, student
 Tariq Yousif, student
 Usama Siddiq Yousif, student
 Mohamed al-Sadiq, graduate
 and 7 others

On 2 September 1995 security officials raided a house in al-Thawra, a suburb of Omdurman, arresting the above 22 men. The authorities acknowledged the detentions on 12 September by announcing that a number of "communists" had been arrested at an illegal meeting. They did not, however, give any indication of how many people had been detained or where they were being held. Amnesty International believes that the men, who remain in incommunicado detention without charge or trial, may have been arrested for non-violent political opposition to the government and are at risk of torture.

Amnesty International's concern for their safety has intensified because of events which have taken place since their arrest. A student vigil at Khartoum University on 9 September calling for the release of these detainees sparked a wave of protests which culminated in four days of violent street demonstrations in Khartoum and, reportedly, also in other major northern Sudanese cities. These have been the most extensive anti-government protests since the current government seized power on 30 June 1989. The authorities called on youth organizations supporting the government to mobilize "to repulse the aggression directed at Sudan". Clashes took place between demonstrators and government supporters, and at least four people were killed in Khartoum - one in what appears to have been an extrajudicial execution when gunmen singled out one student in the Faculty of Engineering in the University of Khartoum and shot him dead.

By 14 September hundreds of suspected government opponents had been detained in a major security clampdown. Not all were involved in the riots. The authorities appear to have used events on the streets as a pretext to arrest prominent non-violent critics of the government, including a number of lawyers (see UA 218/95, AFR 54/31/95, 15 September 1995). Several independent reports describe brutal beatings by security officials and police.

On 17 September the authorities announced the release of "all students arrested during the riots", but said that many would still face criminal charges. However, the announcement did not mention people other than students, nor students arrested before the demonstrations. In the past, official statements that all prisoners have been released have not always been correct.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrests on 2 September took place within a few days of the authorities announcing that they were releasing "all" political detainees. This was followed by the release of 32 detainees and 18 political prisoners convicted on criminal charges, but it is not yet confirmed that all political prisoners have been freed. Similar announcements of releases of political prisoners in 1991 and 1992 were also rapidly followed by new arrests.

Political prisoners are held in Sudan on the basis of Constitutional Decree Two of 30 June 1989 which established a State of Emergency. The decree bans the "showing of any political opposition by any means to the regime of the Revolution for National Salvation".

Anyone detained by the Sudanese security authorities is at risk of ill-treatment, in particular those held in secret detention centres known as "ghost houses". Those whom the authorities suspect may have information about opposition activities are at risk of severe torture. In March 1995 one of the most notorious "ghost houses" was partially closed and its inmates transferred to a section of the main prison in Khartoum, still under the supervision of the security authorities but reportedly in better conditions. However, other "ghost houses" are known to exist.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of 22 men on 2 September 1995 in Omdurman, who Amnesty International believes may be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned on account of their non-violent opposition to government policies;
- seeking assurances of their physical safety and guarantees that they are not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- urging that they be immediately and unconditionally released unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence 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

Telexes: 22385 PEPLC SD or 22411 KAID SD

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Brigadier Bakri Hassan Saleh
Minister of the Interior People's Palace
PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Telegrams: Minister of the Interior Bakri Hassan Saleh, Khartoum, Sudan

Telexes: 22842 WZARA 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

Telexes: 22459 KHRJA SD or 22461 KHRJA SD

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr 'Abd al-Aziz Shiddo
Minister of Justice and Attorney-General
Ministry of Justice, Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Obeid Haj Ali
Chief Justice, Law Courts
Khartoum, Sudan

Mr Angelo Beda Bambara
Chairman of the Human Rights Committee
of the Transitional National Assembly (TNA)
Omdurman, 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 5 November 1995.