

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 119/95 Fear of torture / Possible prisoner of conscience 25 May 1995

SUDAN Sadiq al-Mahdi, former Prime Minister

Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the *Ansar* order of traditional Sudanese Islam, leader of the banned opposition Umma party and Sudan's Prime Minister overthrown in the 1989 military coup that brought to power the current government, was arrested in Khartoum on 16 May 1995. Amnesty International is concerned that he may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment while being interrogated and that he may be a prisoner of conscience.

Sadiq al-Mahdi is reported to be held in Kober prison, the main prison in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. While Kober prison does not have a reputation as a torture centre, questioning by security officers usually takes place either at the security headquarters or at the offices of military intelligence. There are consistent reports of torture and ill-treatment by security officers engaged in interrogations.

The authorities are reported to have announced that Sadiq al-Mahdi is "being interrogated for involvement in subversive activities" but have not made clear the substance of these allegations. Independent sources have said that the arrest appears to be a reaction to an outspoken speech he made criticizing the legitimacy of Sudan's current rulers on the occasion of the Muslim feast of 'Eid al-Addha in early May. The military government, which espouses a radical Islamist ideology, is deeply sensitive to opposition from other interpretations of Islam.

There are unconfirmed reports that up to seven other members of the Umma Party have also been detained.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Sadiq al-Mahdi, who Amnesty International believes may be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned on account of his non-violent opposition to government policies;
- seeking assurances of his physical safety and guarantees that he is not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released unless he is 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) Dr al-Tayib Ibrahim Mohamed Kheir
Minister of the Interior
People's Palace
PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Telegrams: Minister of the Interior Dr al-Tayib Ibrahim Mohamed Kheir, 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

* The TNA's Human Rights Committee was created by Sudan's government-appointed Transitional National Assembly in December 1992, apparently to counter what the government perceives as hostile human rights propaganda. The Committee's Chairman has said that it investigates reports of human rights violations.

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 15 July 1995.