

May 8, 1990

SUDAN

Lest They be Forgotten....

Letters from Shalla Prison

The military government in Khartoum has consistently argued that it holds few, if any, political prisoners, and that detainees are treated well and released after a brief period in detention. Sadly, for the Sudanese people, this is far from the truth. In a moving letter recently smuggled out of Shalla Prison near al Fashir in Darfur, political prisoners give the lie to the regime's efforts to deny their existence. Seventy one detainees also sent out a copy of a protest memorandum they submitted to the government on March 17. The memorandum details the torture and ill-treatment they have suffered, the hardships inflicted on their families, and records their commitment to hold the government "responsible for whatever may happen to us and our families as a consequence of these grossly unjust measures".

In spite of the government's efforts to maintain a news blackout, Africa Watch knows of hundreds of political detainees who are kept in the principal high-security prisons of Kober (in Khartoum North), Shalla (near al Fashir in Darfur) and Suakin (on the Red Sea). In addition, there are credible reports that a much larger number of people are detained in provincial prisons.

Africa Watch has repeatedly protested the detention without trial of hundreds of trade unionists, doctors, journalists, politicians, lawyers, academics and other citizens. Africa Watch has also condemned, in the strongest terms, the torture of detainees by members of the Sudanese security forces.

Africa Watch welcomes the government's announcement that it will reprieve and release of two doctors sentenced for their role in the doctors' strike of November-December 1989. Dr. Mamoun Mohamed Hussein was sentenced to death, and Dr. Sayed Mohamed Abdalla to 15 years' imprisonment. However, the welcome reprieve of these two political detainees must not distract attention from the large number of detainees who remain in prison without charge.

In an effort to let their own words reach the outside world, we reproduce below the letters we have obtained from detainees in Shalla prison.

A Personal Letter from Shalla.

The following letter was written by a political detainee to a close friend living abroad. The detainee was arrested in 1989, and held for some time in Kober Prison before being transferred.

Dear Sister,

If this letter finds its way to you, then we must still be living in the age of miracles! With all the craft I applied, I still would be exceptionally lucky to get this letter to you. Actually we all need to be lucky, the all of us. We are literally lumped in a Godforsaken spot in the heart of the desert. Godforsaken, that is sure, but I am afraid that it is also forsaken by the outside world. That is what really worries us. They have smuggled us in the middle of the night to this place. We were summoned at about eleven in the evening and were told to pack our few belongings and were then escorted by soldiers armed with machine guns [from Kober] to the military airport, loaded in a military aircraft and flown ... to ... nowhere! We landed in al Fashir and from there we were hurriedly driven in a truck which was waiting to "Shalla" about 15 miles into the desert. "Shalla" in Darfur dialect means "took him"!

We arrived at this place early morning of the 16th February 1990 and since then we have been subjected to conditions which are, believe me ---, beyond my ability to describe. Poor meals, bad and filthy water, contaminated and dirty buildings. Two medium size wards for all this number, with two small rooms with holes dug in the ground to be used as toilets! No matter how poor the meals are these so-called toilets flood with waste - which is actually the whole meal. I don't think any one of us digest 1% of what he eats! The only possible and available drainage system is to bring some prisoners twice a day to carry few bucketfuls of it and throw it in the desert not very far away. In such circumstances I think you agree with me that speaking about environmental health becomes a very highly sophisticated mental exercise!

I have heard about ... concentration camps but none of them is like this. I wish I had the talent, I would have produced a bestseller! Anyway I will not have the chance to try - we spare the few pens and fewer sheets of paper for the more important and urgent writings of which this one, we agreed, is one.

Dear ---, I am not trying to scare you or exaggerate to give you a gloomy picture. This is exactly the situation. It is not these horrible conditions which really worry us. We will fight to survive them. We will continue our struggle and we are sure, with our faith in our cause and our people, we will overcome and win. What

worries us and what we really find devastating is that the regime keeps denying to the international community that we are being detained! They are denying our very existence. Isn't that horrible! And does it not, in a way reflect the intention of this regime to quietly and slowly get rid of us?!

We are not allowed to contact anybody. Our families are not allowed to visit us, and, as you know, even if they are allowed, whose family can afford the plane fare from Khartoum to al Fashir - LS3000! And if they could, how could they travel from al Fashir to Shalla, and where to stay?

I am sure you are already doing every possible thing to help us and we also knew with great appreciation what Amnesty International and other organizations for human rights are doing for us, give them our regards and gratitude.

Give my love and regards to ---, and to all our friends. I forget to tell you that --- and the children went to stay with --- in [the Gulf]. It is long since I heard from them last. I hope you find a way of getting in touch with them. Convey my greetings and love. My greetings also to --- and --- and very special greetings to ---.

Well ---, it seems things are going from worse to worst. We have just received a new batch of 30 detainees. They have been "kidnapped" from Kober in the same manner. The newcomers are supposed to share with us the same "accommodation"! And the same existing facilities... You can imagine.

Dear ---, lots of love to you all. I promise you to keep the flame on.
Your brother,

Protest Memorandum from the Detainees in Shalla

Below is a translation from Arabic of the memorandum written by the 71 detainees in Shalla Prison:

In the Name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate,

17 March 1990

Sirs,

The Prime Minister
The Minister of the Interior
The Attorney General
The Chief Justice
The Director of Sudan Security Service

Through the good offices of,

The Governor, Darfur Region
The Director, Prisons of Darfur Region
The Director, Shalla Prison

We, the detainees in Shalla Prison, the signatories (below), present the following:

- * We have been detained in groups, after 30 June 1989.
- * Fifteen of us have suffered from continuous torture, that went on through ten to fifty days, in places prepared for torture, by *zabania* [those devils who inflict punishment on the condemned in Hell]. These ones among us have suffered from psychological as well as physical torture, at the hands of trained *zabania*, through the use of hide whips, hitting by sticks, pouring cold water, being cramped or squeezed into WCs, being denied sleep, and being insulted by degrading words and phrases. The traces of torture which remain on their bodies stand as clear evidence of this. This violates all international and regional conventions, which prohibit torture of political and trade union detainees.
- * While investigations of official enquiries were carried out with respect to some of our number, most of our cases have not been considered, and no charges have been presented. Therefore our detention violates all human rights conventions, agreements, and

charters which the Sudan Government has signed and should be obliged to respect.

* In addition to that, we have been transferred to Shalla Prison, without the least respect for human rights, and without any prior notice to us or to our families. The main objective of this move is to effect complete isolation upon us, and thereby do additional harm to our families by making them worry and suffer, searching for us and tracing our whereabouts, and to place upon them the burden of following our news and situation, which violates all traditions. We need not mention that our families suffer and face severe economic and financial problems due to the fact that all detainees have been dismissed from their jobs. All of them are without a source of income.

* We resent your continual efforts to deny the existence of political detainees in Sudan. The most recent was by Lt. Gen. Omer Hassan al Bashir, President of the [Revolutionary Command] Council, in a statement to Voice of America on 13 March, in which he said that all political detainees had been freed, and denied the existence of any such detainees in Sudanese prisons. Though we do not want to challenge that, we have the right to raise obvious questions: if all the political detainees have been released, who are we? Why are we here?

* We are in Shalla Prison in Darfur and this is a matter of fact, which you know as well as we do ourselves. We renew our refusal and rejection of these repressive measures of detention, exiling, and arbitrary dismissal from work. We ask for our immediate release and reinstatement in our jobs, and we request an immediate investigation into the torture some of us have suffered. We also hold you responsible for whatever may happen to us and our families as a consequence of these grossly unjust measures.

Signed,

	Name	Date of Detention	Profession
1	Mahjoub Osman	3 Sept. 89	Journalist [al Ayyam]
2	Mustafa Ahmed el Sheikh	2 Dec. 89	Businessman
3	Samir Girgis	30 July 89	Retired journalist
4	Dr. Mohamed Mahjoub Osman	15 Sept. 89	Economic researcher

5	Dr. Farouk Kadoda	30 July 89	University lecturer
6	el Tayib Abu Jideri	3 Dec. 89	Lawyer
7	Jalal el Din Mohamed Sayed	29 July 89	Lawyer
8	Dr. Abdel Moniem Attiya	13 Jan. 90	Minister of Health, research
fellow			
9	Mubarak Hassan Furaijun	4 Dec. 89	Retd. army colonel
10	Dr. el Sheikh Kineish	25 Nov. 89	Lecturer in Medicine, Univ.
Khartoum			
11	Dr. Khalid Hussein el Kid	6 July 89	Lecture in English
12	Abbas Mohamed el Subaai	3 Dec. 89	Print engineer
13	el Sir Sayed Khattab	1 Dec. 89	Businessman
14	el Sir Ibrahim el Natig	3 Dec. 89	Employee, Dept. of Communications
15	Salah Yousif el Alim	3 Dec. 89	Employee, Judiciary
16	Ali el Mahi al Sakhi	24 Nov. 89	Employee, Central Mint
17	el Sayed Mukhtar el Fil	10 Dec. 89	Pharmacist, Khartoum
Hospital			
18	Jimaa Abdel Gadir	4 Dec. 89	Employee, Dept. of Communications
19	Abdel Azim Awad Surur	15 Sept. 89	Lawyer
20	Dr. Omer al Najib	30 Sept. 89	Medical doctor, Gedaref
Hospital			
21	Dr. Najib Najm el Din	4 Aug. 89	Medical doctor, Bahri Hospital
22	Dr. Hamoda Fateh Rahman	23 Nov. 89	Medical doctor, Kosti
Hospital			
23	Dr. Taha el Haj Karom	29 Nov. 89	Medical doctor, Bahri
Hospital			
24	Jaafar Bakri	4 Dec. 89	Employee, Judiciary
25	al Haj Osman Mohamed	3 Dec. 89	Tax officer
26	Ahmed Akasha Mohamed	3 Dec. 89	Tax officer
27	Ali el Awad Ali	5 Dec. 89	Tax officer
28	Salah Taha	9 Dec. 89	Officer, Cooperative
Department			
29	Ahmed Mohamed Abdalla Hijazi	3 Dec. 89	Teacher
30	Dr. Mohamed Rajab	12 Jan. 90	Lecturer, Univ. of Khartoum
31	Ahmed Mohamed Saleh	28 July 89	Engineer, National Electricity Corp. (NEC)
32	Osman Dau el Beit	6 Dec. 89	Engineer, NEC
33	Abel Rahman el Zein	6 Dec. 89	Lawyer
34	Kamil Abdel Rahman el Sheikh	3 Dec. 89	Technician
35	Huzaifa el Sheikh Salama	3 Dec. 89	Accountant, Police Dept.

36	Badr el Din Abdel Tam	4 Aug. 89	Arab-Sudanese Oil Co.
37	Hashim Babiker Tilib	2 Dec. 89	Klenko Co.
38	Mohamed Hamza el Mardi	2 Dec. 89	Employee, Jumeiza Factory
39	el Sheikh el Khidir Ahmed	4 Dec. 89	Inspector, Ministry of Finance
40	Abdel Rahman Abdalla Salantot	3 Dec. 89	Businessman
41	Tariq Hassan el Sheikh	29 July 89	Engineer, Civil Aviation Dept.
42	Siddiq el Zeilai	22 Aug. 89	Journalist [<u>al Medan</u>]
43	Abdullah Ibrahim Ahmed Kubail	3 Dec. 89	Employee, Judiciary
44	Babiber Ibrahim	18 Dec. 89	Employee, Metereology
45	Mubarak Adam Muhajjir	9 Dec. 89	Engineer, Kenana Sugar Factory (KSF)
46	Badr el Tom	6 Dec. 89	Engineer, KSF
47	Mohamed el Nayir	6 Dec. 89	Employee, KSF
48	Shihab el Din Ahmed Jaafar	16 Dec. 89	Nurse, Omdurman Hospital
49	Bashir Hamad	23 Nov. 89	Teacher, Kosti
50	Abdel Rahim Omar Bagardi	23 Nov. 89	Employee, Post Office
51	Abdel Rahman Daifallah	16 Jan. 90	Teacher
52	Abdel Moniem Ibrahim el Tahir	16 Jan. 9	Businessman
53	Kheiri Abdel Rahman	9 Dec. 89	Engineer, NEC
54	Juma el Amin Mohamed	12 Jan. 90	Businessman
55	Suadei Daraaj	14 Dec. 89	Worker, Stores Dept.
56	Mirghani Ahmed Abdallah	14 Dec. 89	Teacher
57	Mustafa Abdel Gadir	2 July 89	Lawyer
58	Sayed Issa	23 Sept. 89	Lawyer
59	Adnan Zahir	4 Jan. 90	Lawyer
60	Dr. Ahmed el Moula	29 Nov. 89	Pharmacist
61	Dr. Majdi Ishaq	5 Dec. 89	Doctor [psychiatrist], el Tijani el Mahi Hospital
62	Abdel Moneim Salman	3 Feb. 90	Teacher
63	Hussein Abdel Gadir Shaglaban	28 July 89	Engineer, NEC
64	Mohamed el Amin Suleiman	9 Dec. 89	Director, Klenko Co.
65	Sayed Sid Ahmed Abdel Rahim	27 July 89	Engineer, NEC
66	Kamal Abdel Karim Mirghani	29 Nov. 89	Bank of Sudan
67	Amin Abdel Rahim Oshi	1 Dec. 89	Petroleum Corporation
68	Mahmoud Mohamed Omer Kimeir	9 Dec. 89	Central Mint
69	Dr. Mirghani Ali Habiballah	28 Nov. 89	Medical Doctor, Wad Medani Hospital
70	Dr. Ushari Ahmed Mahmoud	9 July 89	Ex-Lecturer, University of Khartoum [Human rights activist]
71	Suleiman Mohamed Suaayl	7 Nov. 89	Businessman

Conditions in Detention

Denial of Medical Attention

Africa Watch has learned that two of the signatories of the memorandum are suffering from serious health complaints and are being denied medical attention. Dr. el Sheikh Kineish has suffered from a heart condition for some time. He has had two heart attacks and is due for a bypass operation. Mohamed Mahjoub Osman has a problem with his sight. Before his arrest he had an operation on one eye to implant a new lens. The other eye has developed an ulcer and he can hardly see. Both men have been denied medical treatment.

Torture

In addition to the account of conditions in Kober Prison detailed in our recent report on Sudan, Denying "The Honor of Living Sudan: A Human Rights Disaster, Africa Watch has also received documents originating from the medical administration of Kober Prison, which highlight the medical state of detainees admitted to the prison. These detainees had already spent some time in secret non-regular detention centers, known as "ghost houses", and had been tortured there. One document, dated December 12 1989, and signed by three medical doctors, details the results of inspecting 19 newly-admitted prisoners, all of whom bore the physical evidence of recent torture and other ill-treatment, such as flogging. The prison authorities insisted on the medical inspection before they admitted the detainees, in order to have proof that the detainees had been tortured while in the ghost houses, and not in Kober.

Beating and other ill-treatment remain disturbingly common. One week after the execution of 28 army officers alleged to have taken part in an attempted coup on 22-23 April, relatives of the executed officers staged a demonstration in Khartoum. This peaceful demonstration was broken up by members of the security forces, and many relatives of the officers, most of them women, were arrested. They were detained for several hours, insulted and beaten. They were brought before a security court and given suspended prison terms, and ordered not to participate in any further such demonstrations. Africa Watch knows of eleven people, including several women, who were detained and abused in this manner.

Recommendations for Action:

Please write urgent appeals to the Sudanese authorities listed below, calling for the government to:

- * Publish an exhaustive list of political detainees in all prisons in Sudan in order to allay the fears of their families, friends and colleagues;
- * Release, immediately and unconditionally, all political detainees;
- * Put an immediate end to the torture and deliberate humiliation of detainees;
- * Allow the families of detainees access to their relatives;
- * Improve the conditions under which detainees are held at Shalla, and to allow access to medical facilities.

Please address appeals to:

His Excellency Lt. Gen. Omar Hassan al Bashir
Head of State, Defence Minister and Commander-in-Chief
Army Headquarters
Khartoum
Sudan

His Excellency Mr. Abdalla Ahmed Abdalla
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Sudan
2210 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

His Excellency Mr. el Rashid Abu Shama
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Sudan
3 Cleveland Row
St James's
London SW1A 1DD
United Kingdom

Recent Africa Watch Publications on Sudan:

Report:

Denying "The Honor of Living", Sudan: A Human Rights Disaster. March 1990. 140 pages, obtainable from Africa Watch, price \$12.00.

News From Africa Watch:

Sudan: The Massacre at el Jebelain (23 January 1990).

Sudan: The Forgotten War in Darfur Flares Again (6 April 1990).

Sudan: Threat to Women's Rights from Fundamentalist Regime (9 April 1990).

Sudan: Officers Executed and Doctor Tortured to Death (April 26, 1990).

Africa Watch is a non-governmental organization created in May 1988 to monitor human rights practices in Africa and to promote respect for internationally recognized standards. Its Executive Director is Rakiya Omaar; its Research Director Richard Carver; Alex de Waal is Research Consultant; and Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen are Research Associates; Jo Graham and Ben Penglase are Associates.

Africa Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, an organization that also comprises Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch. The Chairman of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice-Chairman is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, the Deputy Director is Kenneth Roth, Holly Burkhalter is Washington Director, Susan Osnos is Press Director and Joyce Mends-Cole is Counsel to Human Rights Watch.