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SUDAN

INSIDE AL BASHIR'S PRISONS: Torture, Denial of Medical Attention and Poor Conditions

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On 23 January, Abdel Moniem Salman died in Kober Prison. He was a political prisoner who had been in detention for nearly a year, without having been charged. Despite the grave condition of his health, for more than six months Abdel Moniem was denied the medical attention he urgently required. His tragic death is the inevitable outcome of the current practice of the Sudanese government of detaining large numbers of political prisoners under poor conditions, and denying them medical treatment. Many prisoners have also been subject to torture.

The Death of Abdel Moniem Salman

Abdel Moniem Salman was an intermediate school teacher, an Inspector of Education in Khartoum Province teacher, a member of the Intermediate School Teachers' Union, and the secretary of the now-banned Socialist Teachers' Association. He was well-known for his opposition to the program of the Moslem Brothers, the fundamentalist organization behind the current government in Sudan. After the Popular Uprising of April 1985 which brought down the rule of then-President Nimeiri, Abdel Moniem contributed a weekly column to the Communist newspaper al-Medan, in which he criticized the then-Minister of Education for his Islamic fundamentalist leanings. Abdel Moniem has suffered from a heart condition and diabetes for many years. In 1980, while in Kober prison at the command of President Nimeiri, he nearly died on account of the sudden onset of a diabetic coma. Following a protest by the other prisoners, who feared that he would die if such an incident recurred, he was released.

After the seizure of power by the government of Lt-Gen Omer al Bashir in June 1989, politicians and trade unionists with left-wing or secularist sympathies have been systematically detained. On 3 February 1990 Abdel Moniem was arrested and taken to Kober Prison. Six weeks later he was transferred to Shalla Prison, in the desert near el Fasher town in western Sudan. In May, due to lack of insulin, he went into a diabetic coma. He was transferred to el Fasher hospital. In June the doctors at el Fasher referred him to Khartoum. This request was passed to the Security Service, which is the ultimate arbiter of the location of detainees. The Security officers refused the request for Abdel Moniem's urgent transfer, and he was kept in el Fasher for six months. When Abdel Moniem was finally transferred, his condition had deteriorated significantly. In Khartoum, he was sent to Kober prison, and then to Omdurman Military Hospital where he died. The exact causes of death have not been ascertained, but were probably closely linked to his diabetes and heart disease.

Political Detentions in Sudan

The tragic death of a political prisoner in detention is the inevitable outcome of the practice of the present Sudanese government of holding large numbers of prisoners under poor conditions without adequate medical care. Were it not for the fact that many detainees are themselves physicians and thus able to give assistance to their fellow prisoners, such a tragedy would almost

certainly have happened earlier, and on a wider scale.

Since the current military government seized power in Sudan in June 1989, a total of several thousand people have been detained without charge and without trial, at least once. While most have subsequently been released, there are presently estimated to be a minimum of 400 political prisoners in Sudan. About half of this number are held in "ghost houses", the unofficial detention centers of the security services, and the remainder in the official prisons, chiefly Kober Prison (Khartoum), Shalla Prison (Darfur Region), Port Sudan, New Halfa and Kassala Prisons (Eastern Region), Dabak prison (near Khartoum), and Military Headquarters. More than fifty political detainees are known to be suffering from medical conditions which require treatment.

Commonly, those suspected of anti-government activities or views are detained by members of the security forces (organizations newly-set up since the coup d'etat of June 1989) and taken at once to "ghost houses". Some of these ghost houses include the confiscated offices of the currently-dissolved Electoral Commission and the Sudan Bar Association. In these centers, detainees are subjected to a wide range of forms of abuse. Africa Watch knows of over 70 detainees who have been subjected to torture. Some of these methods of torture leave serious physical and psychological scars, and one detainee, Dr. Ali Fadul, died under torture in April. After a period ranging between a few days to several weeks, the detainees are transferred to normal prisons, including Kober Prison, Shalla, and Port Sudan. In these prisons the detainees are not subjected to torture and are allowed to socialize with other prisoners. However, medical attention is frequently deliberately denied, even to seriously ill detainees, giving rise to grave concern in many cases. In Shalla prison, located in a remote desert, lack of food, clean water, and sanitation is also a matter of concern.

Denial of Medical Attention and Poor Prison Conditions

Kober Prison

Comparatively, Kober is the best of the prisons in which political detainees are held. It contains a small clinic with no qualified physician, but the fact that it is in Khartoum means that prisoners' relatives are able to bring medicines, and referral to hospital is (in principle) relatively easy. However, it is not the prison staff but the Security Service which is responsible for this referral, and delays are common. More than twenty detainees are currently awaiting referral. Some detainees who have suffered severe problems at Kober include:

Mahjoub Sid Ahmed, a trade unionist (electrician) suffered a heart attack at Kober prison in August 1989. He had severe chest pains, his blood pressure dropped, he was sweating and semi-unconscious. Fellow prisoners urged that he should be transferred to hospital urgently. This transfer was delayed, and Mahjoub nearly died.

Sadiq el Shami, a prominent human rights lawyer and member of the Bar Association, has been detained several times in Kober since June 1989, and on one occasion was transferred to Port Sudan. He suffers from hypertension and chest pains. During his second detention, following torture, he suffered a suspected heart attack and lay untreated for a day. Sadiq has subsequently been released.

Yusuf Hussein, a geologist, was arrested on 9 January 1990. For several months he was kept incommunicado in a ghost house, where he was subjected to torture, before being transferred to Kober, where he remains. Yusuf suffers from hypertension, heart disease and a spondylitis of the spine, for which he requires urgent medical treatment.

Siddiq Yusuf, an engineer, was arrested in January 1990, detained and tortured in a ghost house, and then transferred to Kober, where he remains. He suffers from severe asthma and is reportedly in a critical condition.

In November 1989 the prisoners at Kober protested to the Minister of the Interior about the lack of medical care. Their demands have not been met. A second protest was made last month, which has also received no response.

The most serious medical and psychological problems affect detainees who have just arrived in Kober prison after suffering torture in detention centers. Many suffer internal bleeding and other medical conditions that surface only later. Most have lost weight, often 10 kg (22 pounds). Traumatized by their experiences, they are depressed and frightened, and need two weeks or more of special treatment before they can return to a modicum of normality. This special treatment is given by other prisoners and consists of care and attention, preferential food brought from outside, and tranquilizers. The prison authorities give no special attention to the victims of torture.

Family visits are rare at Kober. Since June, the families of detainees are entitled to one visit lasting a quarter of an hour each month. The procedure for obtaining this visit is lengthy and difficult, involving repeated visits to the Security Headquarters. Great persistence and patience is needed to prevail, and some families have not been successful in obtaining visits.

Shalla Prison

Shalla prison contains political prisoners, convicted criminals, psychiatric cases, and captured Chadian rebels. The total number of prisoners is above 800. The prison is overcrowded and facilities are inadequate. The political prisoners are segregated from the others, but share the same exercise area.

Sanitation is of a poor standard. The 60 or so political prisoners have the use of two very primitive pit latrines, which are emptied by hand (by the convicted criminals), after which the excreta is left in a heap behind the cell block. This is not only unhygienic, but also leaves a foul smell. Flies multiply, carrying infections and also proving a great nuisance. If possible, prisoners use mosquito nets to keep the flies off them when they are asleep. The water is poor and contains infective agents such as giardia, as well as having a high concentration of minerals, which cause kidney problems. It is also limited, and the prisoners are able to wash only every other day. These problems will become accentuated in the near future due to the serious drought throughout northern Sudan, and the scarcity and rising cost of water.

The food in Shalla is poor. Prisoners eat mostly a millet porridge known as *asida*. Food is increasingly scarce on account of the rising price of food grains due to the current famine conditions. The prison's food budget will now only cover one fifth of the quantity of staple grains that it was able to buy last June. The prisoners face extreme hunger.

Shalla can also be cold, and prisoners are not normally supplied with blankets. Some ordinary prisoners have died of hypothermia on account of the cold.

Detainees in Shalla are not allowed family visits. The prison is also located some 500 miles from Khartoum, where most of their families live, and transport is scarce, expensive, and lengthy.

Medical care in Shalla is extremely limited. There is no qualified doctor at the prison, only a medical assistant. There is a shortage of medicines, which have to be brought from the nearby town of el Fasher. Sometimes, ill prisoners are referred to el Fasher for treatment. In principle, transfer to the hospital occurs once each week. In practice, due to shortage of transport, it is less frequent. Some detainees who have suffered severe health problems include:

Mohammed Mahjoub Osman suffers severe eye problems. He has an artificial lens in one eye which became dislocated. The doctors at el Fasher asked for his transfer to Khartoum. The Governor of Darfur region endorsed their request and passed it to the Security Service, who agreed to the transfer only after three months.

Dr. Khalid el Kid suffered a suspected heart attack, but remained in the prison for an additional twenty four hours because no transport was made available for his transfer to hospital. After many delays Dr. Khalid was transferred to Omdurman Military Hospital in November.

Al Tayeb Abu Jideri, a lawyer who suffers from heart disease and has a history of heart attacks, was belatedly referred to Khartoum.

Salah Taha, who suffers from urethral bleeding and needs referral for a cystoscopy,, remains in Shalla.

Samir Girgis, a retired journalist, who suffers from diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, has been referred to Khartoum but remains in Shalla.

Ahmed Abdel Moula, a pharmacist, who suffers a renal stone, was belatedly transferred to Khartoum.

Jalal al Din al Sayed, a lawyer, who requires jaw surgery, was belatedly transferred.

Hamoda Fatah al Rahman, a physician, who suffers rheumatic arthritis, was belatedly transferred to Khartoum.

Mahjoub Osman, a journalist, who requires pancreatic surgery, was belatedly transferred.

In addition, three detainees are suffering from cutaneous leishmaniasis, and were transferred to Khartoum after four months' delay. They are: **Farouk Kadoda** (university lecturer), **al Sheikh al Khider**, (civil servant) and **Najib Nagm el Din** (physician).

In March and June 1990 the prisoners at Shalla wrote to the Governor of Darfur region asking for their conditions to be improved. Their letter met with no response.

Ilyas Mohammed Soail is a detainee who is suffering serious complications to a compound fracture of his femur. Ilyas, a secondary school teacher, was arrested in Kassala and transported to Khartoum two days later. During the journey the security car in which he was travelling was involved in an accident, and Ilyas broke his leg. For five days he stayed in Gedaref hospital without receiving adequate medical attention, after which he was transferred to Omdurman military hospital and then to Shalla prison. The fracture would have healed with prompt medical care. Instead it became infected and doctors have now recommended that the leg be amputated. Ilyas has since been transferred to Kober prison.

Several of the doctors at el Fasher hospital provided excellent care for the prisoners who were transferred there. As a consequence of this, five doctors were dismissed in May, losing their employment with the Ministry of Health and their pension rights. The five are:

- * Dr. Amir Abbas, Province Medical Officer of Health;
- * Dr. Mohammed Abdel Rahim, Assistant Province Medical Officer;
- * Dr. Mohammed Sadiq, specialist in obstetrics and gynecology (Dr. Mohammed had served in el Fasher for eleven years and was the only such specialist in Darfur region);
- * Dr. Salah Omer, surgeon (he had served eight years in the hospital);
- * Dr. Sayed Abdalla, head of the dental department (the only qualified dentist in the hospital).

These doctors have not been replaced, and, even should the Ministry decide to replace them, doctors willing to serve in Darfur are few. Darfur is a remote region ill-served with health facilities. It is considered a "hardship posting".

While the Chadian rebels were detained in Shalla (between February and October 1990), the prisoners also lived in fear that the prison would be stormed by the well-armed forces of the Chadian rebel leader Idris Deby (whose headquarters were in Darfur prior to his successful invasion of Chad in December 1990), or the forces of the Chadian army, in order to release or capture these men. If the prison were stormed in such a way, the prisoners would be in danger of being killed or wounded in the crossfire.

Shalla is an intensely depressing place. A detainee called Abdel Majid Shakak is known to have committed suicide some years ago.

Port Sudan Prison

Conditions in Port Sudan prison are also poor, though not as extreme as in Shalla.

Professor Mohammed Sayed el Gadal, was arrested 20 September 1989, and released October 1990. Prof Mohammed was for most of this time in Port Sudan prison, which lies next to the Red Sea in an area of extreme heat. He suffers from retinal bleeding, which needs laser treatment. This treatment is not available in Sudan and his doctor has recommended that he travel abroad to obtain it. Without treatment, it is possible that his condition could result in blindness.

Kamal al Gizouli, a lawyer and member of the Bar Association, was arrested on 10 August 1989, and was held in Port Sudan prison ever since. He requires specialized treatment for severe skin rashes. He was belatedly transferred to Khartoum last month.

Omdurman Military Hospital

A number of detainees have been transferred to Omdurman Military Hospital for treatment. They include:

- * **Hassan Abu Zeid**, engineer: bronchial asthma and abdominal hernia.
- * **Mohamed el Amin Sir al Khatim**, farmer: coronary insufficiency.
- * **Kamal Ibrahim Hassan**, university lecturer: gastric ulcer, cutaneous leishmaniasis.
- * **Mesbah al Safi**, engineer: glaucoma in both eyes (he has lost sight in one eye since being detained).
- * **Colonel Ismail al Gak**: severe hypertension.

* **Yusuf Abdel Hadi**, civil servant: coronary insufficiency, requiring treatment abroad.

Testimonies of Torture in Detention Centers

In spite of the hardships in prison, conditions in unofficial detention centers are so bad that most detainees are happy when they reach a regular prison. Kober Prison is even lightheartedly known as "the Hilton". This is because the unofficial detention centers, where detainees are taken immediately after arrest, are far worse. It is here that torture occurs.

While systematic torture of detainees was virtually unknown in Sudan before the present government seized power, it is now disturbingly common. Africa Watch has many received testimonies of detainees who have been tortured, some of which we reproduce below.

The government of Sudan has promised to "clean up" detention centers and to investigate the many reports of torture. While many of the documented cases of torture come from early in 1990, torture continues today. The names of some people subjected to torture in recent months are given below. There are indications that security officers are now more careful in using methods that leave behind fewer physical signs. Africa Watch has received no indication that the government has conducted an investigation into abuses in detention centers, nor that any security officers guilty of torture have been disciplined, let alone prosecuted.

Some of the following testimonies are reproduced and translated from Al Kitab al Aswad ("The Black Book"), a publication clandestinely produced and circulated in Sudan. Others are new. None have been available in English until now.

1. From the testimony of a physician, detained in December 1989:

I was picked up at 2 a.m., taken to a detention center (it was the headquarters of the Electoral Commission), and beaten continuously until 7 a.m. They tied a shirt around my head and poured cold water over my head. I fell to the ground, and they stood on my body. I suffered fractured ribs. They played with a pair of pliers, as if to remove my fingernails, and tied electric cords around my legs, and threatened me with electrocution. They took me outside, blindfolded, and said they would throw me into a well. On another occasion, they said "we have orders to execute you", and they put me - blindfolded of course - against a wall. I heard the guns being cocked and then fired, but there were only blank rounds.

In the Electoral Commission I was kept alone in a small storeroom containing ballot boxes. It was so small that I could not stretch my legs. The windows were closed by bricks. I stayed there six days. There was constant knocking on the door and other noise to prevent sleep. I was only allowed to go once each day to visit the washroom, and when I was there

each security officer who passed would give me a kick or a blow. When I asked for water I was given a can that contained some paint diluted with water. At first I was only given dry bread and lukewarm water, and later I was allowed to have ful [beans] sandwiches.

After six days I was taken to another room. There were 14 others in the room. I stayed there for ten days. It was dark because the windows were covered. There they subjected us to psychological forms of torture. For instance, one security man would come in and ask one of us "which football team do you support?" He would then ask another person, and try to agitate one against the other, making them shout abuse at each other, because they supported different teams. On other occasions they would demand: "who are you?" Then they would refuse to accept the name, and say that really, you are an animal. The detainee would then be forced to repeat "I am a dog" when he was asked who he was. On an other occasion they came in and asked all the engineers to stand up. The engineers then had to shout abuse at the doctors, and the doctors had to shout abuse back at the engineers, and so on. Once or twice they came in and announced to us that everyone was to be executed.

It was totally dark in that room. The prisoners would all hold hands to comfort each other.

Then we were transferred to Kober Prison. After the detention center, it was like the Hilton Hotel. I was never asked for any information, either in the detention center or in the prison.

2. Suleiman Mohamed Soail

Suleiman Soail was a school teacher before being dismissed from work during Nimeiri's rule. To earn living he opened a kiosk to sell newspapers and magazines while doing research in social history. He presented a paper titled "The Ideological Origins of the Mahdist Revolution" to the centenary conference of Mahdist Revolution organized by the history department of Khartoum University. While in detention during Nimeiri's rule he taught history to his colleagues. Soail is married and has four children. His brother Ilyas is also detained and had his leg broken by security officers (see above). The following account is based on Soail's testimony and other eyewitness accounts.

Soail was arrested at home on 7 November 1989. He was held in several different places before being transferred to Kober Prison on 14 January 1990. His arrest was carried out by a force of ten men in three cars. This force included elements from the Sudan Armed Forces and a leading district member of the National Islamic Front called Sayed Abdiin who is also a member of Popular Committee (government-controlled neighborhood association) in their area. His house was searched and he was taken blindfolded to the Electoral Commission building. There he was tortured: he was kicked, beaten with whips and by hands, and he had cold water poured on him for more than an hour. He was told he would be given one night in which he could confess, otherwise in the morning he would be taken to al Markhiat [a military area outside Khartoum] where he would be executed. Following that he was kept in a room for four days and then in a bathroom in

which he spent 19 days.

Again, Soail was tortured and interrogated. Soail said one of the people who carried out the interrogation was a drunk officer who sometimes smelled of marijuana. He was allowed to go to the facilities once every 24 or 48 hours, and for five minutes only during which time he was also subjected to verbal and physical assault. During that time he was given three small sandwiches every day. Only after 29 days was he allowed to wash. At this stage the interrogation started to concentrate more on Soail's opinion on and assessment of the "Salvation Revolution", and whether he would resume his political activities if he is released.

3. Mustafa Obada

Mustafa Obada is a member of the central committee of the General Trade Union of the Workers of the River Transport Department. He was arrested during Nimeiri's rule for his political activities. This is his testimony of his detention:

I was arrested at 11.30 on 14 December 1989 by a force of six men; some were in a Sudanese army uniform, but they said they were members of the Sudan Security. For 36 days I stayed in unknown places, and only then was I transferred to Kober Prison.

[After my arrest] I was put in a car, and as it started to move the turban I was wearing was pulled over my eyes, blindfolding me. After a while, the car suddenly stopped and they told me to get out. One of them said to me "You claim to be a man, here I am younger and smaller than you". I replied "This is an unfair fight, you out-number me, and I am blindfolded. In addition there is no point in fighting". They laughed at me and accused me of being a coward, and said that "though you claim to be heroes, you are not even men, just a bunch of homosexuals". They told me then to get back into the car. After a while the car stopped again to collect someone, whom I recognized from his voice to be my colleague Mirghani Ahmed Abdalla. The car then stopped again, this time their victim was Saudi Darraj [a leading member of the Communist Party and a trade unionist]. The car moved and crossed the Blue Nile Bridge and took al Giyada al Ammaa street before reaching its destination - a ghost house. A gate was knocked and a group of bodyguards asked "whom have you brought tonight?" When Saudi Darraj's name was mentioned they chanted with joy and said "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar".* And the car entered.

In the car I was hit twice on my head and fell unconscious. While I was still in a daze I was ordered to stand up, otherwise they said I would be beaten by sticks and whips. The three of us [new detainees] were put in between two rows of torturers and asked to walk from the beginning of the line to the end, while they beat us viciously from both sides. They used

* "God is great."

different instruments, such as sticks, whips, gun butts and other things I could not identify. We were also told to hold hands and turn around in a circle. When the torturers saw me begin to lose consciousness they started to kick and beat me. The other detainees also fell unconscious and we were all being kicked on our sides, kidneys, bladder and testicles. After we were revived we were punched on our jaws and on our ears, knocking us to the ground. Then we were ordered to lie flat on the ground and subjected to 60-70 lashes, before being taken to a small dark room while our torturers were singing. After two hours an interrogation started, which lasted for four hours. We were made to put our hands up and turn our faces against the wall. Towards the end of the interrogation, a veiled man came in and took us out, blindfolded and bare-footed, to stand for 20 minutes in a very hot place before being made to stand in an icy cold place for two hours and then put into a bathtub.

On the third day Bakri Jibril [another detainee] joined us and we were lashed 40 times each. On the fourth day each had 80-120 lashes. Beside this, before every meal, we were lashed and beaten on both sides of our hands, fingers and nails. One of the torturers uncovered his face and told us that he was neither scared of being recognized by them nor of having his name being published in al Maidan.^{*} At this time a new detainee joined us. He was a 58 year-old Bedouin accused of dealing in stolen cars. One day, a member of the security force asked him what was his political complexion. "A Muslim Brother", he replied. "Well," the security man said to him, "these are Communists who would like to challenge you in al Mubatana".^{**} He asked the Bedouin to lash us. We had 40 painful lashes each from this man ... he was a Bedouin, experienced at lashing and the Mubatana.

After 15 days our group of detainees was transferred from the National Electoral Commission building to a house near the Citibank building in Khartoum. Here, the torture took a psychological form rather than a physical one. Two meals were served in a peculiar manner; the food was spilled on the ground. Cleaning the body, hands and clothes was prohibited, and we were insulted for smelling and being dirty. Moreover a form of military abuse against civilians was used. We were insulted: "you 'dead' civilians" - meaning lazy, weak and cowardly. Following that, a group interrogation was carried out by two men in the cellar, the bathroom and outdoors. The interrogation consisted of questions like: "Which is your party? Your political complexion? Have you read the last issue of al Maidan? Where is al Khatim Adalan?"^{***} Do you know any communist in your work place, or where you live? Are you a trade unionist? Who collects your trade union reports? Are you married or not?"

^{*} The Communist Party newspaper, now publishing underground editions.

^{**} A Bedouin tradition in which men suffer physical hardship to prove their manhood.

^{***} A member of the central committee of the Communist Party who specialises in analyzing fundamentalist religious ideology and is considered very dangerous by the Moslem Brotherhood.

I recall the names of my torturers: Omar, Badran, al Jakas, Siddig, Awad, Adam, Nabil, al Tayeb, and Nubi; but these might not be their real names.

4. Abdel Rahman al Zain

Abdel Rahman al Zain is a Sudanese lawyer in his early thirties, single, a member of the Sudanese Communist Party, and an active member of the Sudanese Bar Association. He defended Juba University students who were dismissed from the university by the administration because they disputed the result of student union elections. He wrote the following letter:

His Excellency the Minister of the Internal Affairs,
through the good office of the Director of Kober Prison.

Your honours,

I am Abdel Rahman Al Zain, a Sudanese citizen, presenting my complaint to you, hoping for your attention and action.

Sir, on Wednesday 7 December 1989 at 12.30 I was apprehended by a group of armed men who did not conceal their identities. They took me blindfolded to an unknown place where I was put in a bathroom with a wooden locked door. The place, 1 x 1.6 metres, was unlit and inundated with water. There were some other detainees in this cell, we 12 were all placed in the bathtub where we stayed for five days. I was severely lashed with a whip and deprived of sleep. It was painful. The meals consisted of three small sandwiches and no water to drink; even worse, we were not allowed to relieve nature, neither to defecate nor to urinate. Following that I was transferred to another suffocating dark bathroom. This time its size was 1 x 2.3 metres; a quarter of the space was occupied by a bathtub, there were also another three detainees. We had the same treatment in addition to continuous insults, vituperation and derision for four days and nights. Afterwards I spent 13 days in an office. On 29 December 1989, in the dark of the night, carried like slaughtered animals upside down, we were taken to another unknown place. I was made to stay till 7 February 1990 when I was transferred to Kober Prison.

Your Excellency, for all these reasons, I hope you could take all possible measures to investigate my complaint. I am ready to give evidence to substantiate and prove my "allegations" and take all steps required.

with thanks,

Signed, Abdel Rahman al Zain

Copy to: 1/ the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.
2/ the Chief Justice.

5. *Abdel Rahman Salantoot*

Abdel Rahman Salantoot is an economist by training, a graduate of the faculty of Economics and Social Studies, has a Masters degree from the U.S. He worked for the Sugar Trading Corporation before resigning to become a businessman. He is active politically against the government. He was detained during Nimeiri's regime in Dabak Prison for 6 months. He is married with children and lives in Omdurman.

Abdel Rahman Salantoot wrote the following letter:

His Excellency the Minister of Internal affairs,
through the good offices of the General Director of the Prison Department,
through the good offices of the Director of Kober Prison,

Sirs,

I am Abdel Rahman Salantoot, a Sudanese national. I was detained on 3 December 1989. I spent 5 days in the Sudan Security Headquarters and was then transferred to the old Bar Association Building. On 18 December 1989 I was transferred blindfolded to an unknown place where I was tortured both physically and psychologically. I was not allowed to practice my religious rites [say my prayers], not allowed to contact my family and verbally assaulted by derogatory language.

Physically, I was beaten by whips and forced to do very strenuous physical exercises for long hours, I was not also permitted to relieve nature regularly, and when permitted I was guided blindfolded.

I hope that an inquiry into my situation will take place; I am ready to provide witnesses to prove my complaint.

God helps and stay well

A. Salantoot

A detainee in Kober Prison

6. *Ali al Sakhi*

Ali al Sakhi is 50 years old, a worker and leading figure in trade union politics in Sudan in which he has been involved for many years. The last job he had was at the Sudanese Central Mint. He spent long periods in detention during Nimeiri's rule and was released from detention after the 1985 popular uprising.

In the name of God,
The Merciful, the Compassionate

His Excellency the Chief Justice in Khartoum,
His Excellency the Attorney General,
His Excellency the Minister of Internal Affairs
through the good offices of the Director of Kober Community Prison in Khartoum,

Warm greetings,

I am presenting this memorandum with the belief and pride in the justice of Sudanese judiciary which has been protecting our rights, hoping it will result in a just investigation.

Sir, though I am fifty years old, my rights as stated in the Constitution and laws of this country, and in international human rights conventions, have been violated by individuals and official institutions whose behaviour should be investigated. I demand that an official inquiry should be instituted. This would be in accordance with the basic principles of justice, and would reaffirm the rights of the Sudanese citizens, which have been violated.

My story goes as follows; I was detained on 22 November 1989 by two people who presented themselves as members of the Sudan Security Organ. I was taken to its building where I spent 12 days. Then I was transferred blindfolded with some other detainees to an unknown place, which I believe your investigation would locate. This was where I was tortured. I spent approximately 51 days in that place. We were 12 people in a room 3 x 3 metres in size. The room did not have windows and had bad ventilation.

The room was not suitable to keep animals in let alone human beings. I was tortured there, physically as well as psychologically. Moreover I was threatened with being killed. Sir, I summarise the forms of torture in the following manner:

The Physical Torture;

- * I was beaten by whips and hands and kicked for four days - the torture was carried on for long periods and started at midnight or early morning.
- * I was slapped in a non-stop manner in front of all other prisoners.
- * I was forced to do some physical exercises; I was forced to stand up on one leg for very long hours, followed by being put into a squatting position for hours, despite being 50 years old.

- * I was deprived of sleep for long periods.
- * I was also forced to do childish acts in order to intensify my feelings of humiliation and deny my dignity.

The Psychological Torture;

- * Though I suffer from a kidney infection, I was not allowed to urinate and relieve myself for long hours.
- * I was not given drinking water also for a long period of time. I was not allowed to take a shower or brush my teeth.
- * The food provided was poor, dirty and inadequate for human survival.
- * I was assaulted verbally with obscene and insulting language.

The Threat of Execution;

- * They threatened to kill me. They said "you will be liquidated". Someone came at 4 a.m one day and asked me to prepare myself for death as for saying prayers. He said a death sentence had been passed. Then left and never showed up again.

On 14 January 1990 I was taken blindfolded to an unknown place: I was surprised to find myself in Kober Prison, where I am still detained. I suffer from retention of urine in addition to a pain on my chest caused by torture inflicted on me by the security men. The security know from their records that I suffer from heart disease.

Your Excellency, the Chief of Judiciary
....., the Attorney General

With belief in your sense of justice I present my memorandum to you. Based on the torture the facts I have mentioned I urge you to:

1. Investigate the torture I have been subjected to and to bring to justice anyone proved guilty.
2. Present charges against me and bring me to court, or else set me free.
3. Immediately provide me with medical treatment.
4. Respect my right to legal compensation.

with many thanks,

Ali A. al Sakhi

7. Gassim Humdalla

Gassim Humdalla is an agriculturalist, educated in the U.S.S.R. His elder brother Faroug was one of the leaders of the communist aborted coup of 1971 and was summarily tried under Nimeiri and executed. Gassim was also detained during Nimeiri's regime. He wrote the following letter detailing his detention and torture:

In the Name of God,
The Compassionate, the Merciful

To the Minister of Internal Affairs,
through the good offices of the Director of Prisons,
through the good offices of the Director of Kober Prison.

Your honours,

I was detained on 23 November 1989 at my home in Dabak town in central Sudan. It was my wedding day. They told me "you are wanted for 5 minutes only, and then you'll come back". I did not have a chance to inform my relatives, friends and guests. They did not know where I have disappeared to, nor whether I had been detained or not, nor who had detained me.

The same day I was transferred to Khartoum Security Headquarters. So to my family and friends my disappearance became a mystery for quite a long time. The officer who seized me and the others [detained on the same day] then introduced us to the guards as a bunch of infidels, outlaws and communists. He added, "give them no mercy, they deserve to be treated without human compassion". The crime had been identified and the verdict had also been passed. I was kept with another six persons in a dirty, unlit, suffocating room. It had no windows; in fact it was a lift shaft.

I stayed there up until 30 November 1989. I was insulted and beaten and kicked and woken several times each night and asked to stand up and sit down many times. I was not allowed to wash my body or clothes. One of the detainees fainted because of exhaustion and the high level of humidity. He was taken to the Military Hospital and remained there for a long time.

This is a summary of my first week in detention:

Your Excellency the Minister of Internal Affairs, on Monday 4 December 1989 I was transferred blindfolded to an unknown place for an interrogation. I stayed there until Monday 11 December 1989. During this week I was subjected to different and unusual

forms physical and psychological of torture. Though they are very difficult to describe I summarise them as follows;

- * Physically I was kicked, punched and beaten with hands on my face, head and stomach randomly.
- * I was randomly lashed by whips on my back and thighs. My clothes were tied on my back while I was being beaten. When I was sent to Kober my underwear was covered with blood. The torture has left permanent scars on my body.
- * I was subjected to an obscene language unacceptable to any ethical and straight man.
- * We were made to sleep on a floor of a small dirty room, which was only two meters square, with no windows.
- * I was not allowed to contact my family in that whole period.
- * I was denied medication despite the fact that the authorities know that I suffer from hypertension. They refused to give me the medicine I need, although they were available in the building and I had continuously asked for them.
- * They threatened to kill me and throw into a well in that unknown place.
- * The bodyguards depending on their mood decided when we should go to relieve nature, usually after very long time and then in a dirty place while blindfolded.
- * The quality of the food was poor and we had to eat the meals without water to drink and sometimes with very little water. This resulted in one of the detainees suffering from poisoning.

Your Excellency, the Minister of Internal affairs, this is only the small picture of some of these practices which are strange and alien to Sudanese society. Our rights have been violated: not only have these alien practices been carried out, though no official charge was presented, but in addition no inquiry has been undertaken. Beginning with the way in which I was detained, and its timing, and continuing with the physical and the psychological torture, each element stands as a flagrant violation of my rights as a citizen. These practices leave indelible traces on us and create lasting distrust and alienation between people.

For all these reasons I present my complaints. I am hopeful that the perpetrators who tortured and tried to humiliate me without the least consideration of the spirit of Islamic verse and legal legislation in the Quranic sura "*al Issra*" (verse 15). In this sura, Islam has provided humanity with an ideal human rights law, a legal system that seeks to ennoble and dignify mankind and eliminate oppression and injustice.

Sir, my due respects,

Gassim Humdalla

10 February 1990

Copy to/ the Attorney General
/ the Chief Justice

8. *Mohamed Khidir Mohamed Ahmed*

The following testimony is translated from The Black Book. Mohamed Khidir Mohamed Ahmed is a trade unionist.

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

His Excellency the Minister of Internal Affairs,

Through the good offices of:

The Director of Prisons,

The Director of Kober Prison,

Warm greetings,

Subject: Inquiry into the torture which I have suffered.

I was arrested at my family house at the Police Accommodation premises, al Sajana on 1st June 1990 at 1.00 p.m. by a group of four from the Sudan Security Organ. They searched the house and did not find anything. I was then driven to the Sudan Security Organ headquarters, where someone left the car. My eyes were then blindfolded and I was driven to another, unknown place, where I was subjected to physical and psychological torture. Three of the men who had arrested me carried out the torture, which took the following form:

- * I was beaten by a rubber hose all over my body. I was punched on my face and chest, kicked, and beaten with the butt of a gun, concentrating on my buttocks and thighs. Boots were used to crush my toe nails. I was then forced to do very strenuous physical exercise for a long time. I was denied sleep and rest and prevented from sitting down. I was forced to eat food with a high concentration of salt. I was taken to a place raised about four metres above the ground, and then thrown so as to fall to the ground.
- * The psychological torture took the form of threats of execution. They asked me to take an Islamic oath (to prepare myself for death) and then cocked their guns ready to shoot. Then one of them pointed a gun at my head, while the other said "We have killed Ali Fadul from el Dayem and now we have chosen you from al Sajana for killing."
- * I was threatened with being kept in a locked room with seven police dogs, and with being sexually assaulted. They threatened to throw me into the river from the Blue Nile Bridge, and to throw me down a well. This was all in addition to the insulting abuse they hurled at

me and my family all day long.

At 2 a.m. on 2nd June I was taken back to the Sudan Security building and at 10 a.m. I asked to be taken to the military hospital where I was checked by the director of the Emergency Unit. I asked him to write a medical report to prove that I had been tortured. He replied that he would not write any report unless the security services asked him to write it. I was then given medication for about two weeks.

I request on account of my case that an inquiry into the torture which I have suffered be carried out; and that those who ordered and implemented my torture be prosecuted. I am at your service and willing to provide any assistance to prove what I have suffered. As no charges have been brought against me, I demand that I should be set free immediately.

With many thanks,

Citizen, Mohammed Khidir Mohammed Ahmed,

Kober Community Prison

9. Recent victims of torture

Africa Watch has not obtained first hand testimonies of people who have been subjected to torture in recent months. However, we have learned that torture, of the forms described above, has continued in detention centres. Two of those who have been subjected to such torture in November and December 1990 include:

* **Hashim Mohamed Ahmed**, former General Manager of the Sudan Railways Corporation. Engineer Hashim was detained, tortured and released in early 1990, and then detained and tortured again following the strike of Sudan Railways workers in Atbara in November. Hashim suffers from spondylitis of the spine, which requires urgent medical attention. He remains in detention.

* **Dr. Ahmed Osman Siraj**, head of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Khartoum, and academic secretary of the dissolved Sudan Doctors' Union, was arrested in September 1990 and tortured in the headquarters of the Sudan Security Service. He was also detained following the doctors' strike of November 1989, and held in Port Sudan prison. He is in poor health. He remains in detention.

Official Response to Allegations of Torture

Members of the Sudanese Government have repeatedly denied the existence of torture in Sudan.

At a press conference in London on 27 July 1990, Brig Osman Ahmed Hassan, Chairman of the Political Committee of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, was asked about the human rights record of the government, especially with regard to torture. He replied:

There is a very vicious dissemination of misinformation about Sudan abroad in a suspicious mass media campaign alleging that the Sudan violates human rights and that there is lack of the rule of law. There are two sources which feed this mass media campaign against Sudan. The first one is the SPLM/SPLA: it is naturally in their interest to distort things which happen in the South, and secondly the political parties, the now-defunct political parties, some of whose leaders form or constitute opposition to the government abroad.

It is not in our nature, it is against our beliefs, to tolerate torture or any of the practices that people talk about. What is publicised abroad in relation to violation of human rights is repugnant to us as individuals and as a government. Some of the allegations might have had their source in a particular isolated incident where some over-enthusiastic security officer does this or that, but in any case we are looking into all these government executions [sic] including the security organs. We are reviewing everything and we will put everything rights and anybody who is proven to have practised any of these alleged violations will be taken seriously and proper procedures will be [instigated]. Anyone who does not respect human rights is not worthy of government.

In response to a question about the detention of politicians, he replied:

When a coup d'etat takes place, or a revolution, [or] a change in government it's natural to detain some of the leaders of the former regime. This happened in Sudan in June [1989] but immediately and very soon all the leaders of the former political parties have been released except those who have actually engaged in action against the government, those who have committed specific violations of an existing law, or they are charged with certain corruption, so they have been tried and sentenced, or released. Those against whom there were no specific charges have been released. Only in detention there are very few among those leaders of the former political parties, who are under house arrest, not detention.

The government's persistent denial that it holds political prisoners and subjects them to torture only adds to the suffering of its victims. In a letter written by a detainee in Shalla prison, this sense of despair was evident:

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?!

Africa Watch finds the government's denials of detentions and torture to be unconvincing, and is dismayed by the government's repeated unwillingness to respond to any of the allegations concerning human rights abuses in detention centres and prisons.

Conclusion

The Sudan Government is continuing to hold several hundred political prisoners in conditions that are seriously prejudicial to their physical and psychological health, and in some cases, puts them in danger of serious disability or premature death. These are flagrant violations of the basic rights of detainees. In addition, torture is practiced on a systematic basis, particularly in non-official detention centres.

Recommendations for Action:

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

- * Release all detainees unless they can quickly be brought to trial in an independent court for a recognizable criminal offence.
- * Release immediately all detainees who require urgent medical attention, and allow them to travel abroad to obtain specialist treatment, where necessary.
- * Ensure that all detainees have access to adequate medical care, good standards of hygiene and clean water, and sufficient food.
- * Put an end to all forms of physical and psychological abuse of detainees in detention centres.
- * Close all unofficial detention centres.
- * Launch a public investigation into allegations of torture, and bring to trial any security

* See News from Africa Watch, "Lest they be Forgotten... Letters from Shall Prison," May 8, 1990.

officers who are alleged to have inflicted torture.

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, NW
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

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 Chairman is William CarMichael. Its Executive Director is Rakiya Omaar; its Research Director is Richard Carver; Alex de Waal is Research Consultant; Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen are Research Associates, and Ben Penglase and Jo Graham 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, and Susan Osnos is Press Director.

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