

Sudanese political opposition leaders detained incommunicado at risk of torture

Tuesday 12 February 2013

African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)

(12 February 2013)

The Sudanese authorities must grant detainee Professor Mohamed Zain Alabidein immediate access to a specialist medical doctor and appropriate medical treatment. Professor Alabidein recently underwent surgery for bowel cancer. He also suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure. His family, who were permitted to visit him on 30 January, have reported that Professor Alabidein is in extremely poor health, is experiencing stomach pain, and has lost a significant amount of body weight during his detention. The prison medical doctor has reportedly recommended that he be admitted to hospital but this has been rejected by the NISS.

Professor Alabidein has been detained without charge in the custody of the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) since his arrest from Khartoum Airport on 8 January. He is currently detained within the NISS section of Kober prison, Khartoum. During the family visit on 30 January, which lasted fifteen minutes and was supervised by two security officers, Professor Alabidein, who is 66 years old, informed his family that he has been held in a cell with 16 other detainees and required to sleep on a mattress on the ground.

Professor Alabidein is the Political Affairs Assistant to the Chairperson of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). He was one of six political opposition leaders arrested in Khartoum between 7-15 January after attending political negotiations which took place in early January in Kampala, Uganda between the National Consensus Forces (NCF), a coalition of Sudanese political opposition parties and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), a coalition of armed opposition groups.

Four leaders of political opposition parties, thought to be detained in connection with the Kampala meeting, remain in detention without charge and without access to lawyers:

Mr. Abdul-Aziz Khalid, Chairperson of the Central Council of the National Sudanese Alliance Party. Mr Khalid was arrested from his home in Khartoum by the NISS at 9pm on 14 January. He is currently detained incommunicado in an unknown location.

The NISS have refused to provide his family with any information concerning his whereabouts or the charges he faces.

Enstar Alagali, (f), a leading member of the Socialist Unionist Nasserist Party (SUNP). Ms. Alagali is also head of the women's unit within the Sudanese civil society coalition called 'Cooperation for Defending Rights and Freedoms', arrested in Khartoum on 7 January.

Dr. Abdulrahim Abdalla, (m), Regulatory Affairs Assistant to the DUP Chairperson, arrested from Khartoum airport on 8 January.

Hisham Al Mufti, (m), a leader of the DUP, arrested from Khartoum airport on 8 January.

Another political opposition leader, Dr. Jamal Idris, (m), Chairperson of the SUNP, arrested on 7 January, was released without charge from NISS custody on 21 January.

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) calls for the Sudanese authorities to urgently:

Provide Professor Mohamed Zain Alabidein access to a specialist medical doctor and enable him to access any specialist health care services he might need. Professor Alabidein missed an appointment with a specialist medical doctor in the United Kingdom in January, owing to his detention. The Government of Sudan must respect the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners which require that "[s]ick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals."

Immediately make known the whereabouts and nature of any charges against all the detainees, grant them access to their families and lawyers and provide any medical assistance they may require.

Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of the detainees and order their immediate release in the absence of valid legal charges that are consistent with international law and standards or, if such charges exist, to bring them before an

impartial, independent and competent tribunal and guarantee their procedural rights at all times.

Cease the harassment and intimidation of political opponents and guarantee the right to freedom of assembly, association and expression as recognised by the Interim National Constitution (2005) and Sudan's commitments under international law.

Background

The arrests of political opposition leaders in January formed part of a broader campaign by the Sudanese authorities targeting the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly. They came just days after the forced closure of three civil society organisations and one literary forum in Sudan by the authorities.

Popular protests which took place throughout the country in 2012 were met by the Sudanese authorities with excessive use of force, mass arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and ill-treatment.

ACJPS has serious concerns that the little space left for political debate and expression of dissenting views in Sudan is rapidly contracting.

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