

UN Secretary General, New York  
African Union Commission, Addis Ababa  
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva

**Petition on the Deteriorating Human Rights and Humanitarian Situation in Sudan**

Saturday, 21 April 2018

The human rights and humanitarian situation in Sudan continues to deteriorate in a disturbing manner. Serious regression is witnessed in almost all walks of life with the deepening economic crisis and the inability of the population to cope with growing hyperinflation and hikes in the price of consumer goods. The release of some fifty political detainees on 10 April 2018, like many other previous nominal good-will gestures taken by the Government of Sudan (GoS) from time to time, is yet another token measure that fails to address the root causes of the human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country or signify any meaningful improvement in the GoS's human rights record.

This latest decision by the GoS on 10 April 2018 to release another batch of political prisoners illegally arrested and detained for exercising their rights of peaceful protest against the Government's austerity measures comes a few days ahead of the scheduled visit of the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan, Mr. Aristide Nononsi. This is just another attempt to camouflage the gruesome reality of human rights in Sudan and has been preceded by numerous similar decisions in recent years, including the release on 18 February of another batch of prisoners arrested for the same reasons. It is to be noted that hundreds of opposition figures, activists and ordinary citizens were arbitrarily detained in January and February 2018 in connection with peaceful protests and were held for a prolonged period without being charged and without proper access to their families, lawyers or essential medical treatment. Their arrest and release in this arbitrary manner at the whim of the GoS, reveals the state of lawlessness and repression that prevails in Sudan.

In the absence of radical reform of the GoS's powerful security apparatus, there is no guarantee that other individuals and groups will not be arrested at any time for exercising their legitimate constitutional rights. Sudan's National Security Act of 2010 bestowed on the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) broad powers of arrest and detention of individuals without charge or trial for prolonged periods of time, contrary to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Article 151 of Sudan's Interim National Constitution which limited the powers of NISS to information gathering, analysis and advice. In January 2015, the Sudanese Parliament amended the Interim National Constitution to endorse this expansion of

NISS's mandate and transform it from an intelligence agency into an all-powerful security agency.

Moreover, in August 2005 President Bashir issued a decree amending the Sudan's People's Armed Forces Act to provide members of the armed forces with immunity if they committed human rights crimes and violations, including arrest and detention of perceived government opponents. In practice, the provisions of this Presidential Decree were extended to include all militia groups and other security forces allied with the GoS in conflict-affected areas, thus consolidating impunity for the widespread commission of human rights crimes in Sudan.

It is a cause of particular concern that, although the Government's announcement about the release of political prisoners allegedly covers all political detainees, its implementation has been selective and discriminatory in nature. Hundreds of political prisoners from Darfur and other war-torn regions of the country were not included and they continue to languish in miserable conditions, often without court rulings or orders, either in detention facilities run by the NISS or in well-known prisons such as Kober prison in Khartoum North and the prison in Port Sudan. In addition to some 160 individuals arrested during clashes between the army and Darfur armed movements in East and North Darfur States in late May 2017, 61 native leaders and others from the Maaliya tribesmen have been incarcerated in Port Sudan prison for more than nine months. The *Janjaweed* leader, Sheikh Musa Hilal and about 300 of his kinsmen and supporters are held by NISS without charges or trial in unknown detention conditions since their arrest in Mustariha area mid-November 2017. Moreover, hundreds of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and political activists from the IDP communities in Jebel Marra and elsewhere in Darfur are held incommunicado in different parts of the country.

A telling example of the GoS's discriminatory practice in regard to the release of peaceful protestors and political activists is the arrest and detention of Sheikh Matar Younis Ali Hussein, a prominent native administrator and peace activist from Darfur, who has been held by NISS in Kober Prison without charges or trial since 2 April 2018. Sheikh Matar (48 years old), is a blind clergyman serving a large community of IDPs and war victims in his native area in Darfur. He was arrested in his home in Zalingei town (Central Darfur State) and has since been transferred to Kober Prison in Khartoum, which places a heavy burden on his family and followers.

Another example of the Government's discrimination against political detainees from Darfur is the fact that dozens of university students from Darfur are frequently arrested and held in government custody due to their participation in students' demonstrations and public protests. The following students are still being held by the security forces since their arrest and detention on 13 September 2017 following a public rally they organized in Khartoum North.

1. Yasir Abdalla Mohamed (Awral), Omdurman Ahlia University, Faculty of Arts, Second Grade
2. Adam Zakaria Adam, Omdurman Islamic University, Faculty of Education, Fourth Grade
3. Bashir Yagoub Mohamed, Omdurman Islamic University, Faculty of Education, Fourth Grade.
4. Salim Mohamed Musa, Al-Zaeem Al-Azhari University, Faculty of Urban Studies, Fourth Grade
5. Al-Hadi Abdelmoumen Abdelshafie Abdalla, Al-Zaeem Al-Azhari University, Faculty of Political Science, Third Grade.
6. Zakaria Musa Abakar, Al-Zaeem Al-Azhari University, Political Science, Third Grade.

In conclusion, we wish to express our deep concern about the frequent arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals for political reasons in Sudan as well as the selective and discriminatory treatment of political detainees, particularly those coming from the conflict-affected areas. We are also deeply concerned about the extremely harsh conditions in Sudanese prisons, especially in detention facilities run by the security forces, where detainees are often subject to physical and mental torture and inhumane and degrading treatment, as well as being deprived of adequate food, medicines and other daily necessities.

We call on the relevant mechanisms of the United Nations, the African Union and the international community at large to bring effective pressure to bear on GoS and ensure that it undertakes concrete measures to:

1. Guarantee the safety, physical integrity and well-being of all persons held in government custody and put an immediate end to the use of torture and inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners and detainees by NISS.
2. Allow all political detainees, especially those held in detention facilities run by NISS, to have immediate and regular access to their family members, legal advice and essential medicines and medical care.
3. Bring all individuals arrested and detained for political reasons before courts of law without delay and enable such persons and their lawyers to challenge the legality of their arrests and the conditions of their detention
4. End discriminatory practices and treatment of all persons and political activists originating from Darfur and other war-affected regions of Sudan who are currently held in government custody, especially those persons accused of sympathy with the armed movements in these areas.
5. Embark on a comprehensive reform of the laws relating to Sudan's security apparatus so as to bring them into conformity with international standards. The GoS should amend or repeal measures that allow security officials carte blanche to commit human rights violations. In particular, it is vital that the GoS amends the National Security Act of 2010 as well as the Criminal Procedures Act of 1991 and the State of Emergency Act of 1997 and ensure that the provisions of such laws are in line with international standards on the treatment of people deprived of their freedom and guarantee them fair trial and access to legal counselling.
6. The GoS should repeal all Presidential Decrees that bestow immunity on members of NISS, the armed forces, the Rapid Support Forces and other

government-affiliated paramilitary and militia groups and any other measures that encourage these forces to commit human rights crimes with total impunity.

Signed:

1. Abdelbagi Jibril, Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre, Geneva, Switzerland
2. Abdelmageed Haroun Salih, Human Rights Activist, NY, USA
3. Abdelmagid Abboud, Human Rights Advocate, Paris, France
4. Abdel Mutaal Girshab, Human Rights Consultant, MENA Region, Cairo, Egypt
5. Abdelrahman Gasim, Darfur Bar Association, Kampala, Uganda
6. Abdelshakour Dirar, Chairperson, Sudanese Lawyers and Legal Practitioners, in the UK, London, UK
7. Ahmed Elzobier, Human Rights Activist, Nairobi, Kenya
8. Ahmed Hussein Adam, Research Associate, School of Law, SOAS University of London, London, UK
9. Ali Agab, Human Rights Advocate, London, UK
10. Ali Haroun, Peace Activist, Paris, France
11. Cory Williams, Darfur and Beyond, Phoenix, USA
12. Drar Adam Drar, Secretary General, Face Past for Future Foundation (FP4F), Kampala, Uganda
13. Eileen Weiss, Co-Founder, NY Coalition for Sudan, NY, USA
14. Elhag Warrag Sidahmed Warrag, Editor-in-Chief of Hurriyat Electronic Newspaper, Kampala, Uganda
15. Elsadig Adam Ismael, Darfur Civil Society Forum and Governance Bureau, Khartoum, Sudan
16. Elsadig Ali Alnour, Darfur Union in the UK, London, UK
17. Eric Cohen, Co-founder, Act for Sudan, Boston, USA
18. Eric Reeves, Senior Fellow, Harvard University's François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, San Francisco, USA
19. Esther Sprague, Sudan Unlimited, San Francisco, USA
20. Fadail Ahmed, Writer and Artist, Kampala, Uganda
21. Faith McDonnell, Director, Institute on Religion and Democracy, Washington DC, USA
22. Fatehi Eldaw, Writer and Human Rights Activist, Chicago, USA
23. Fatima Ghazali, Journalist and Women Rights Activist, Washington DC, USA
24. Ghandi Khalil Lein, Representative, Kamma Organization for Development Initiatives (KODI), Kampala, Uganda
25. Hamid Ali Nur, Civil Society Initiative, Khartoum, Sudan
26. Hamid Eltigani Ali, American University in Cairo, Cairo, Egypt.
27. Hussien Bashir Haroun, Human Rights Activist, Cairo, Egypt
28. John H. Weiss, Associate Professor of History Cornell University, NY, USA
29. Kamaleldine Mustafa, Human Rights and Peace Activist, OH, USA
30. Katie-Jay Scott, Stop Genocide Now, USA
31. Laura Limuli, Coordinator, Brooklyn Coalition for Darfur & Marginalized Sudan, NY, USA
32. Lauren Fortgang, Never Again Coalition, USA

33. Maddy Crowther, Waging Peace, London, UK
34. Martha Boshnick, Co-chair Darfur Interfaith Network, Washington, DC, USA
35. Marv Steinberg, Coordinator, Genocide No More-Save Darfur, CA, USA
36. Mohamed Saleh Yassen, Independent Journalist, Lille, France
37. Mohamed Suliman, Darfur Association in Belgium, Brussels, Belgium
38. Mohamed Yassin, Secretary General, Committee for Religious Freedoms and Citizenship Rights, Rome, Italy
39. Moniem Elgak, Researcher, Dublin, Ireland
40. Motasim Adam, Secretary General, Darfur People's Association, NY, USA
41. Najlaa Ahmed, Human Rights Advocate, Khartoum, Sudan
42. Nuraddin Abdulmannan, The Nubian Project, Washington DC, USA
43. Omer Ismael, Human Rights Activist, Washington DC, USA
44. Rebecca Tinsley, Journalist and Writer, London, UK
45. Sabri Elshareef, Centre for Democracy and Peace, NY, USA
46. Sallam Tutu, Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad, UK and Northern Ireland, London, UK
47. Samih Elshiekh, Blogger, Liege, Belgium
48. Samuel Totten, Author Genocide by Attrition: Nuba Mountains, Sudan, University of Arkansas, USA
49. Sawsan Elshowaya, Human and Women Rights Activist, Khartoum, Sudan
50. Sharon Silber, US Representative, Society for Threatened Peoples, NY, USA
51. Suliman Baldo, Senior Adviser, The Enough Project, Washington DC, USA
52. Susan Morgan, Co-Founder, Investors Against Genocide, San Francisco, USA
53. Ussama Saeed, Political Activist, The Hague, Netherlands
54. William Rosenfeld, Director, Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, Boston, USA