

URGENT ACTION

SOME CRITICS FREED, OTHERS REMAIN IN CUSTODY

About 79 opposition party members and human rights defenders arbitrarily arrested and detained in January and February have been released. At least 61 others remain in the custody of the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) despite an official announcement that they would be released. They were arrested in connection with protests around Sudan against rises in the cost of food and medicine.

Between 18 and 28 February, about **79 opposition party members and human rights defenders** were released after the government announced that “all political prisoners” would be released. The announcement was made on 18 February, but at least **61 critics**, including opposition party members and human rights defenders, remain in detention, in the custody of NISS. Those still detained include **Omer Yousef El Digair**, the chairperson of the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP); **Almahi Suliman**, the chairperson of SCP in Sennar State; **Mohamed Mukhtar al Khatib**, the political secretary of the Sudanese Communist Party; **Mohamed Farouk Salman**, a leading member of Sudan National Alliance – Forces; **Mohiudeen Eljalad** and **Sidgi Kabbalo** members of the Sudanese Communist Party’s central committee; **Ismail Adam Hamid**, a political activist; **Amjed Farid**, a medical doctor and human rights defender; **Omer Ushari**, a human rights defender; **Salih Mahmoud Osman**, a human rights defender and Vice-Chairperson of the Darfur Bar Association and **Khalid Omer Yousif**, the acting chairperson of the SCP who was appointed after Omer Yousef’s arrest.

They were all arrested by the NISS between January and February in connection with protests organised by opposition activists condemning rises in the cost of food and medicine from the beginning of January. Initially, the authorities had not revealed their whereabouts.

The Director General of the NISS told the press on 20 February that the rest of the detainees would not be released unless their parties “improved their conduct and stopped demonstration and sabotage ... and abandoned their demands to overthrow the regime by force”.

Please write immediately in Arabic or your own language:

- Urging the Sudanese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the remaining 61 opposition members and human rights defenders and any others detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and abandon any criminal proceedings against them;
- Urging them to ensure that, pending their release, they have regular access to lawyers of their choosing, family visits and any medical treatment they may require;
- Calling on them to ensure that pending their release they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment while in detention.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 APRIL 2018 TO:

President

HE Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir
Office of the President
People’s Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister for Justice

Idris Ibrahim Jameel
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 302
Al Nil Avenue
Khartoum, Sudan

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to

Minister for Interior
Hamed al-Mannan
Ministry of Interior
PO Box 873
Khartoum, Sudan

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR MOHAMMED ABDALLA ALI ELTOM Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan, 3 Cleveland Row St James’s SW1A 1DD, 020 7839 8080, info@sudan-embassy.co.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 35/18. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/7886/2018/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Between 7 and 8 January, three SCP leaders were arbitrarily arrested and detained including Omer Yousef El Digair, the chairperson, and Almahi Suliman, the chairperson of SCP in Sennar State. Other opposition party leaders were arrested between 16 January and 1 February. They include Mohamed Mukhtar al Khatib, the political secretary of the Sudanese Communist Party; Mohamed Farouk Salman, a leading member of Sudan National Alliance – Forces; and two members of the Sudanese Communist Party central committee Mohieldeen Eljalad and Sidgi Kaballo. Three human rights defenders, Amjed Farid, also a medical doctor, was arrested on 18 January; Omer Ushari, was arrested on 16 January; and Salih Mahmoud Osman, also a Vice-Chairperson of the Darfur Bar Association and a recipient of many human rights awards, including the European Parliament's annual Sakharov Prize, was arrested on 1 February. Ismail Adam Hamid, a political activist, was arrested on 16 January. Khalid Omer Yousif, the acting chairperson of the SCP was arrested on 23 February.

Amel Habani, a journalist and a recipient of the 2015 Amnesty International Ginetta Sagan Award, Nahid Jabrallah, the director of Sima Centre for Training and Protection of Women and Children's Rights, Egbal Mohamed Ali, Hanan Hassan Hussein, members of the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP), and Sarah Nugdallah, the secretary general of the National Umma Party; were released on 18 February. Mohamed Abdalla Aldoma, the deputy chairperson of the National Umma Party, was released on 19 February.

By the end of 2017, the Sudanese government endorsed a new National Budget for 2018, which includes more economic austerity measures and cuts in spending on health and education while increasing spending on the security sector. The new measures have significantly increased food and medicine prices. The price of a loaf of bread rose from 50 cents to 1 Sudanese pound (SDG) equivalent to 0.055 US dollar (official rate). This increase in the cost of living has sparked numerous public protests in several cities. Since the start of the protests at the beginning of January, over 319 people have been arrested across Sudan. At least 61 of them are still in detention

Since the announcement of the new National Budget 2018, the Sudanese pound's value has continued to depreciate. The exchange rate of the US dollar went up from 24 to 37 Sudanese pounds on the parallel market since the beginning of March.

The NISS maintains broad powers of arrest and detention under the National Security Act 2010 (NSA), which allows the NISS to detain people for up to four-and-a-half months without judicial review. NISS officials often use these powers to arbitrarily arrest and detain individuals, many of whom are then subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. Under the same Act, NISS agents are provided with protection from prosecution for any act committed in the course of their work, which has resulted in a pervasive culture of impunity. The amendment to Article 151 of the Constitution passed on 5 January 2015 that expanded the mandate of the NISS has exacerbated the situation. The amendment transformed the NISS from an intelligence agency focused on information gathering, analysis and advice, to a fully-fledged security agency with a broad mandate to exercise a mix of functions usually carried out by the armed forces or law enforcement agencies. It gave the NISS unlimited discretion to decide what constitutes a political, economic or social threat and how to respond to such threats. Neither the NSA nor the revised Article 151 explicitly or implicitly require the NISS to abide by relevant international, regional and domestic law in the operation of its duties.

Further information on UA: 35/18 Index: AFR 54/7976/2018 Issue Date: 2 March 2018