



## Middle East Studies Association of North America

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October 22, 1992

His Excellency Lieutenant General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir  
Head of State and Defense Minister  
People's Palace. POB 281  
Khartoum, Sudan

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association is dismayed to learn of a wide range of human rights abuses affecting universities and academic personnel in the Sudan. The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2300 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

Specifically, we are concerned about the following policies:

**Dismissal of university professors and administrators** without warning and for no reason (or on grounds of vague "public interest"), sometimes by presidential or executive decree that cannot be challenged in court. Five administrators from the University of Khartoum have been dismissed. Moreover, five faculty were dismissed in March, 1992, from the University of Khartoum:

ABDIN MOHAMED ZEIN AL-ABDIN, Associate Professor of Agriculture, an expert in apiculture, formerly held in detention;

MOHAMED SAID AL-GADAL, Associate Professor of History, author of several books on the history of Sudan, formerly held in detention;

MOHAMMED AL-AMIN AL-TOM, Professor of Mathematics;

TAISER MOHAMED AHMED ALI, Associate Professor of Political Science, author of a book on the political economy of Sudan and Vice-President of the African Association of Political Science; currently required to report to security headquarters twice daily and barred from traveling outside Khartoum;

AL-WATHIQ KIMEIR, lecturer in Political Science;

An additional ten faculty were dismissed from the University of Khartoum in mid-June 1992:

ABDEL-GALIL KARRAR, Department of Physics;  
MOHAMMED OSMAN WAHBANI, Department of Physics;  
ALI OSMAN MOHAMED SALIH, archaeology;  
(Mrs.) FEDWA ABDEL-RAHMAN A. TAHA, Department of History;  
HASSAN ABDEL-ATI, geographer;  
OSAMA OSMAN ABDEL-GADIR, French language and literature;  
BUSHRA EL-FADIL, Russian language and literature;  
DAFALLAH BADAWI, Engineering;  
SAMIR GHOBRIAL, Professor of Mathematics and Engineering;  
MUATASIM ABDALLAH MAHMOUD, Engineering.

We understand also that in the fall of 1990, a large number of faculty and administrators from the Universities of Gezira, Juba, Sudan University for Science and Technology, and the Islamic University of Omdurman were "retired" for political reasons.

We request that the aforementioned university faculty, and all others summarily dismissed from their posts for political reasons, be reinstated in their positions immediately. We also request that you reinstate university faculty at University of Khartoum who resigned in protest over the dismissals. These include:

OMER MOHAMED ABDEL RAHMAN AL-AGRA'A, Professor of Engineering and Architecture and former Dean of the Graduate School;

AHMED ABDEL-MAJID, Zoology;

ASIM IBRAHIM EL-MIGHRABI, Marine Research Unit.

**Imprisonment and possible Torture of University Professors and Students, including:**

MUDAWI IBRAHIM ADAM, lecturer in the Faculty of Engineering, University of Khartoum, arrested in November 1991 and, as of spring 1992, reportedly held outside the prison system in a "ghost house."

MOHAMED AL-IMAM, lecturer at Gezira University, arrested on 24 January 1992, and as of spring 1992, reportedly held in an unknown location.

AHMED OSMAN SIRAG, lecturer in psychiatry and head of the psychiatry department. Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum and former Academic Secretary of the Sudan Doctors' Union, arrested 22 September 1989 to 12 April 1990 and rearrested 9 September 1990. Held for five months in a cell on the roof of the Security Headquarters and convicted by a summary military court on 20 December 1990 under Section 179 of the Criminal Act (1983) without any lawyer or defense witnesses, allegedly for involvement in planning a coup d'etat against the government.



Subsequently held in Kober Prison and suffering complications in his back, neck and right arm due to a prolapsed disc.

At least two economics students from Gezira University, nine students associated with the banned Student Union and 37 students from University of Khartoum were arrested between January and March 1992. The latter included 13 students arrested in a raid on their dormitory at 3 a.m. on 15 February 1992.

We are very concerned about the unjustified detention of all these persons, particularly because such detentions have in the past sometimes been accompanied by the application of torture, particularly in the "ghost houses." We urgently request that all university faculty and students currently subjected to detention or imprisonment for political reasons be released immediately, and that the policy of imprisonment of university faculty, administrators, and students for political or ideological reasons be discontinued. We request that Dr. Sirag either be released or enabled to stand trial with access to defense counsel and witnesses.

**The Banning of the University Students' Union** at the Sudan University of Science and Technology and on other campuses in early 1992. This violated the right of students to assemble peaceably and led to clashes with government security forces in February 1992. We request that Sudanese university students be once again allowed to organize themselves into a students' union.

**The Occupation of University Campuses by Security Forces** since early 1992. This creates an atmosphere of confrontation and appears intended to stifle freedom of expression. We deplore the use of security forces to coerce students to sit for examinations that had been hastily rescheduled in February, 1992 following closure of the University of Khartoum. We urge that the security forces be removed from Sudanese university campuses immediately.

**Dismissal or Suspension of University Students for political reasons.** We understand that during 1992 a large number of students at the University of Khartoum - perhaps as many as 300 - have been dismissed for taking part in a boycott against the sudden rescheduling of examinations. We urge that all dismissed students be allowed to re-enroll at once.

**Closure of Universities.** We understand that the University of Khartoum and the Sudan University of Science and Technology were both closed for a significant part of 1991 and have again been closed for shorter periods in 1992, and that reopenings, when they have occurred, have sometimes been "staggered" to deter students from organizing themselves. We urge you to end the policy of closing universities, because doing so constitutes a form of collective punishment which disrupts the education of all students, whether politically active or not.

**Interference in Self-Governance of Universities.** We understand that in 1989 the government abolished the electoral system according to which the Vice-Chancellor, Deans, and Department Heads of the University of Khartoum were elected by their peers, and replaced it with a system of appointment by the government.

Such policies severely undermine the autonomy that universities need to prosper as centers of intellectual life. We request that these policies be abandoned and that Sudanese university faculties once again be allowed to manage their own affairs, including the selection of their administrations.

**The Islamization or Arabization of Universities**, which since 1991 requires Arabic as the language of instruction in all courses in all public universities in Sudan. This policy discriminates against many southern Sudanese whose native language is not Arabic and who expected that English would be the language of university instruction, as it had been before 1991. This policy has already sharply reduced the southern Sudanese representation at Sudanese universities, particularly at universities situated in the south. The southern Sudanese representation at the University of Juba, for example, shrank from 80-90% of the student body to about 25% after 1991; at University of Khartoum, southerners now represent only about 5% of the student body.

We request that your government take measures to reduce either the scope or the negative impact of the Arabization policy, for example by exempting Sudanese whose native language is not Arabic from the Arabic language examination requirement, as was the case from 1972 until last year, and by restoring English as the medium of instruction at least in universities in the south.

We request that your government look closely into all these matters. In particular, we request that your government publicly clarify the whereabouts and condition of detainees, release detainees held for political or ideological reasons only, and restore dismissed university faculty and staff to their posts.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: His Excellency Brigadier-General Mohamed Saleh al-Zubeir, National Salvation  
Revolution Command  
Ambassador Abdalla Ahmed Abdalla, Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan  
Ambassador James Creek, Embassy of the United States of America  
Mr. Jeff Lumstead, Sudan Desk, US Department of State  
Mr. Steven Morrison, Africa Subcommittee, House Committee on International  
Relations