

Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona • PO Box 210410 • Tucson AZ 85721-0410

5 February 1998

His Excellency Lieutenant General Omar Hassan al-Bashir
President of the Republic of Sudan
People's Palace, PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan.

Fax : 011-249 11 71 724

Dear Lieutenant General al-Bashir:

It has come to the attention of the Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa of the Middle East Studies Association that on the morning of 1 December 1997, in Khartoum, the Sudanese Women Association and the Mothers of the Sudanese Students Union organized a march to the UN headquarters in Khartoum protesting the forcible conscription of students and to deliver a memorandum to the UN representative. The Sudanese authorities then arrived to break up the demonstration. In the events that followed, 33 women were arrested.

In a summary court action, Judge Mohamed Sir Elkhatim Gharabawi sentenced the women to ten lashes and a fine of 25,000 Sudanese pounds. Among those sentenced were two university lecturers, Souad Ibrahiem Ahmed and Sarah Nugdallah. In addition, according to the information received, the judge sentenced Mr. Mustafa Abdelghadir, one of the defenders of the women, to a fine of 500,000 Sudanese pounds or six month imprisonment for exciting the court, and expelled Mr. Hashim Awad Abdelmajeed, another defender, from the courtroom for the same reason. At the end of the trial the people outside the court gathered the fine and paid it immediately to the court. The judge refused to accept the fine of Mr. Mustafa and insisted that he spend a night in prison.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2700 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 principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region. We believe the academic freedom and human rights of the university lecturers and others who were arrested have been violated, and respectfully urge you to direct your personal attention to this regrettable incident.

We further respectfully request that the physical and psychological integrity of the above mentioned women and their lawyers be guaranteed; that, in the absence of valid charges, they are immediately released; that their sentences not be carried out; that the use of corporal punishment and torture be abolished; and that the authorities conduct an impartial and exhaustive inquiry into

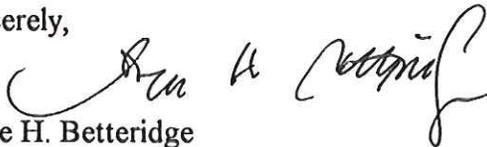
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the above mentioned events and bring to justice members of the security forces and/or judiciary found to have overstepped their mandates according to international human rights conventions.

Finally, we would be very grateful for your response to this letter so that the membership of our organization can be informed of appropriate measures taken on behalf of our colleagues, the two university professors who were arrested for expressing their political views.

Thank you in advance for looking into this matter.

Sincerely,



Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Brigadier Bakri Hassan Salih, Minister of Interior
Mr. Abdel Basset Sabdrat, Minister of Justice and Attorney-General
Mr. Ali Osman Mohamad Taha, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Chief Justice, Khartoum Sudan
Ambassador Ahmed Suliman, Sudan Embassy
Mr. Jeff Lumstead, US Department of State
Mr. Benjamin A. Gilman, House Committee on International Relations