



JEROME J. SHESTACK
President

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

750 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60611
(312) 988-5109
FAX: (312) 988-5100
Internet: abapresident@abanet.org

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His Excellency
Omer Hassan Al-Bashir
President of the Republic of Sudan
People's Palace, P.O. Box 281. Khartoum, Sudan

Your Excellency:

The American Bar Association (ABA), with over 391,000 members of the legal community, strongly supports fundamental human rights and the rule of law worldwide. Our concern focuses on an independent judiciary that is free from undue political influence and that respects the independence of lawyers, judges and human rights advocates in order to maintain internationally recognized standards of fairness and justice.

We are deeply concerned by reports that thirteen persons have been accused and face death sentences before a special criminal court in Khartoum, namely: El Hag Hussein Tabeti, Salah Mohamed Abdel Rahman, Khogali Mubarak Khogali, Moawya Ali El Shafia, Kamal Abdel Rahman, Ahmed Mohamed Abdel Rahman, Yassir Abdel Rahim, Salah Mubarak Khogali, Saad Tyfoor, Faisal Abdalla, Abdel A' al Gumaa, Jayli Yousif, Atif Mohamed Gasimal Sid.

Specifically, by reports that at the last of the multiple sessions pertaining to this case, the defendants swore in court that the statements they gave while in custody of the Sudan Security were forced from them under duress and torture. Also, the Sudan Security is pressuring the families of the defendants to dismiss their current defense counsel.

Additionally, we understand that the Court in its November 24 session ordered Sudan Security to transfer the defendants to prison, where they could have access to their counsel and to their families. To date, the Sudan Security has refused to obey this order and has refused to permit the families to have contact with the defendants. Sudan Security continues to refuse to allow counsel for the defendants to speak privately with the accused.

Several organizations, in the defense of the rule of law, have publicly criticized the government for these alleged dictatorial measures and claim that the Sudan government routinely charges unpopular citizens with political crimes against the government in efforts to silence the political opposition.

These allegations, if true, cause serious concerns about the safety and freedom of the thirteen accused. Such harassment clearly would violate international human rights norms of fairness and due process. As a representative of the legal profession, the American Bar Association is compelled to call attention to such injustices wherever they occur. Our sole concern is the maintenance of the rule of law throughout the international community.

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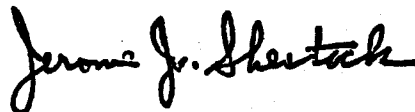
We agree that preservation of security of the state and public order are responsibilities of any government. Nevertheless, these concerns cannot justify the imprisonment of individuals who have not been fairly charged with a criminal offense and have not received a fair trial.

We respectfully urge that the thirteen persons be released forthwith from custody of the Sudan Security and be held in prison, in order to adequately consult legal counsel. Also, we respectfully urge that the accused be accorded a fair and prompt trial in accordance with international human rights norms.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters. We look forward to your response, and we intend to circulate this response throughout the international legal community.

In view of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is especially incumbent on the government of Sudan to implement the fundamental human rights to which it has subscribed as a member of the United Nations.

Sincerely,



Jerome J. Shestack

cc: The Honorable Madeleine Albright
The Honorable John Shattuck