

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

June 1, 1998

His Excellency Lieutenant General Omar Hassan al Bashir
President of the Republic of Sudan
People's Palace
PO 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.

According to an organization concerned with human rights, Advocate Ali Alsayed, a leading member of the Alliance for the Restoration and Democracy (ARD) and several ARD lawyers were allegedly arrested on May 6, 1998 by a group of unidentified armed men for staging a boycott opposing the government's Constitution. Allegedly, Mr. Alsayed and the ARD lawyers were detained by the Sudan government, but no charges were filed against them.

Also, reportedly, a lawyer, Khalid Abu Elrous, and other unnamed lawyers have allegedly been detained in an unknown place without formal charges being brought against them. We have been informed that the Sudan government has arrested lawyers and human rights advocates, in opposition to the government, on five separate occasions in the month of May.

These allegations, if true, could cause serious concerns about the safety and freedom of the aforementioned lawyers and human rights advocates in Sudan. Such harassment clearly would violate international human rights norms of fairness and due process. Silencing the voices of these attorneys and human rights advocates through surreptitious detentions violates the international norms reflected in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, specifically the freedom of speech.

The sole concern of the American Bar Association is for the maintenance of the rule of law in the international community and the elements necessary to sustain it. We agree that the preservation of public order is the responsibility of any government. Nevertheless, these concerns can not justify the suppression of freedom of speech.

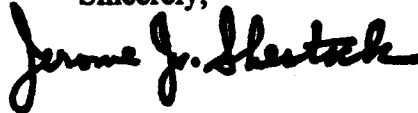
The ABA respectfully urges the government of Sudan to carry out a full investigation into these allegations, and if they prove to be true to identify those responsible, bring them before an impartial tribunal and apply the appropriate sanctions against them. We also intend to monitor any future arrests of lawyers in Sudan.

We hope you will reply to this letter. It would indeed be a tragedy if your leadership was marked by a world-wide recognition by lawyers, judges and human rights advocates that the government of Sudan is not respectful of human rights and disdains the rule of law. That is the world's impression of such acts.

In view of the 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.

With utmost respect, we urge you to take steps to remedy a condition in your power to correct.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome J. Shestack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jerome J. Shestack

cc: The Honorable Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State
The Honorable John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights & Labor
The Honorable Donald Teitelbaum, U.S. Chargé d' Affaires to Sudan