

PUBLIC

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UA 307/04 Fear of forcible return

UAE/SUDAN **Abdelaziz Khalid Osman (m), Sudanese national, aged over 60**

Abdelaziz Khalid Osman, a political opponent of the Sudanese government, is at imminent risk of being forcibly returned to Sudan by authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). If sent back to Sudan, he may be at risk of torture, incommunicado detention, and unfair trial.

A former political prisoner in Sudan, Abdelaziz Khalid Osman is the chairman of the Sudan National Alliance / Sudan Alliance Forces (SNA/SAF), an armed political group in Eastern Sudan.

On 23 September, he was arrested by UAE authorities at Abu Dhabi airport on his arrival from Cairo, Egypt. He remains in detention in an Abu Dhabi prison. UAE authorities are said to be considering a request from Sudan for his extradition. Although he has had access to a lawyer, he reportedly has not been given the opportunity to challenge his continuing detention, or any decision on his forcible return to Sudan, before a court. He is said to suffer from recurring back pain and high blood pressure.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

If forcibly extradited to Sudan, Abdelaziz Khalid Osman would return to a country in which political opponents are often detained in prolonged incommunicado detention and tortured by security forces. When they are brought to trial, the trial is invariably unfair. For instance, dozens of members of the Popular Congress (PC) have been detained incommunicado in the past three years. Eighteen members of the PC are currently being tried in Khartoum, the capital, on charges of "plotting a Coup d'Etat", some of which carry the death penalty. Some of the 18 allege that they have been tortured into confessing such a plot.

The Sudan National Alliance and its armed wing, the Sudan Alliance Forces, have at times fought with the Sudanese armed forces, including in October 2002. The group is part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a loose umbrella of Sudanese opposition parties based in Eritrea, which armed groups in Darfur, western Sudan, currently at war with the Sudanese government, have joined. Political opponents in Darfur and in eastern Sudan have complained of being marginalised by the Sudanese government and by peace talks which focus on ending the civil war in the South of the country. Towards the end of October 2004, the Sudanese government and the NDA held talks on peace in Cairo.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the arrest and detention of Abdelaziz Khalid Osman;
- urging that he be given the opportunity to challenge his detention and any decision to forcibly return him to Sudan before a court of law;
- seeking assurances that he is being treated humanely and has access to medical care if necessary;
- calling for his release unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- urging for him not to be forcibly returned to Sudan.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Muhammad Nakhira Al-Dhahiri

Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs

Ministry of Justice

POB 753

Abu Dhabi

United Arab Emirates

Fax: + 971 2 681 5155

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Shaikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

POB 1

Abu Dhabi

United Arab Emirates

Fax: + 971 2 4494994

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of UAE accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 December 2004.