

**Sudan: Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre
on 18 March 2009**

**Details on “Ghost Prisons” in Sudan, and whatever information is available
on operation of these prisons. Who are detained? Have people ever
escaped?**

According to a document from *Amnesty International* it states

"Ghost houses" are private houses used as secret detention and torture centres in Sudan. Their use appeared to have ceased some years ago, but since September 2004 there have been many reports of detainees being kept incommunicado and sometimes tortured in such houses. Some private apartments where political detainees are allegedly ill-treated near Kober Prison in Khartoum North are nicknamed "Abu Ghraib". (Amnesty International (28 February 2005) *Sudan: Further information on: Detention without charge/Fear for safety/Prisoner of conscience/possible prisoner of conscience AI Index: AFR 54/027/2005*)

The *UK Home Office* note in their Country of Origin Information Report page 66 paragraph 14.16

On 13 February 2006 Amnesty International reported a raid by armed police and security forces at Juba University in Bahri, Khartoum on students who were gathered peacefully in front of the administration building awaiting a response to a letter concerning the relocation of the university back to Juba in south Sudan. The report noted that:

“According to a credible source, the detainees have been taken at night to unofficial National Security detention sites known as ‘ghost houses’, where they have been tortured. The detainees have reportedly also been deprived of food and denied access to legal counsel and their families. Reasons given for the continuing detention of the remaining 51 male students include destruction of public property, arson, public disturbance, and crimes against the state – which potentially carries the death penalty. They have not yet been brought before a judge to have the lawfulness of their detention reviewed.” [16n] (UK Home Office (30 April 2008) *Country of Origin Information Report - Sudan*)

An article from *The Times* (London) notes

They drove me to a "ghost house" - a secret detention centre - and abused me. I was the Zaghawa doctor helping the rebels, they said. I had spoken to the papers. I was told to shut my mouth or face the consequences. I was transferred to a remote village clinic, a punishment posting, where I was the only doctor.

One day the Janjawid attacked. They surrounded the girls' school, and, while government troops stood guard, they gang-raped the girls. I had to treat the victims, the youngest of whom was 8 years old. I was sickened and horrified beyond words.

Aid workers arrived and asked me to tell them what had happened: despite my fears, I did so. Days later the military and security men came for me again. This time I was beaten, tortured and taunted by gibes of "black dog" and "slave". I was gang-raped repeatedly. (The Times (London) (14 July 2008) *I was raped and taunted as a 'black dog'*)

Another article from *The Times* (London) states

Africa has provided a surprisingly large input into our academic life. Take Nadia "Q" who worked as a science lecturer in a university in Sudan. Through her work she heard about and joined a prohibited political movement campaigning for justice in Darfur. As a result of her involvement, she was detained several times and kept in one of Sudan's notorious "ghost houses". Finally, with the help of a friend, she fled to the UK. After a few months in Britain she was given an international scholarship to study for a PhD in science in a leading university. Cara supported her with a grant to meet a shortfall in the scholarship. Her ambition after completing her PhD is to continue her research with a UK pharmaceutical company. (The Times (London) (26 November 2008) *They escaped the knock at the door and went on to win Nobel prizes*)

According to a report from the *UN Human Rights Committee* point 22 states

Despite assurances from the State party, the Committee voices concern at the many reports from non-governmental sources of "ghost houses" and clandestine detention centres. Following the events of 13 June 2007, 13 people were arrested during a protest against the construction of the Kajbar dam and four of them were held incommunicado for a week; to this day the whereabouts in detention of two of these people is unknown. (art. 9 of the Covenant) (UN Human Rights Committee (10 January 2007) *Sudan: "Consideration of Reports submitted by States Parties under Article 40 of the Covenant [CCPR/C/SDN/3]"*)

A report from *BBC News* under the heading 'Torture concerns' notes

One of the detained activists, Khartoum Human Rights Centre head Amir Suleiman, told the BBC he and a colleague had been arrested along with Mr Hummida three times since Monday.

"They interrogated me about the centre's activities and with relation to the Darfur case and the ICC," he said.

Unconfirmed reports suggest his colleague Abdel Moneim Al-Jak was badly beaten while he was in custody on Wednesday.

Mr Suleiman said he was due to go for more questioning on Thursday.

"The Sudanese government is well-known for having little tolerance for criticism," said Georgette Gagnon, of the US-based Human Rights Watch.

"This is part of a wider pattern of trying to silence those who support justice and to suppress information about the human rights situation in Sudan," she said in a statement. (BBC News (27 November 2008) *Fears for held Sudanese activist*)

The report continues

Amnesty International said it feared Mr Hummaida was being mistreated in custody.

"Fears for his safety are heightened by the fact that he was previously arrested in 1990 and spent a year and a half in the "ghost houses" of the NSIS [National Security and Intelligence Services], where he was subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment," the rights group said in a statement.

According to Amnesty, Mr Hummaida is the former director of Sudanese Organisation against Torture and a United Kingdom citizen. (ibid)

Another document from *Amnesty International* notes

Osman Hummaida is the former director of Sudanese Organization against Torture (SOAT) and a United Kingdom citizen. He has been held in incommunicado detention by the NISS since 24 November. He was arrested at noon, together with Abdel Monim Elgak, by three agents from NISS. They were reportedly stopped in the streets of Khartoum. On the same day, a third human rights defender, Amir Suleiman was also arrested by the NISS in Khartoum. Information available to Amnesty International indicates that the three men were held in the NISS offices in Bahri area in Khartoum. They were allegedly interrogated for hours by NISS officers. (Amnesty International (26 November 2008) *Sudan: "Urgent Action 325/08 [AFR 54/044/2008]"*)

It continues

Osman Hummaida was not released following his detention, and is being held incommunicado by the NISS. There is no information on his current whereabouts or about the state and conditions of his detention. Although a member of his family has reportedly asked to be allowed to visit him, access has been denied by the NISS.

Osman Hummaida suffers from high blood pressure and asthma. Amnesty International fears for his health as reports received indicate that although he has been given access to his medicine, he has not been given access to a doctor while in detention. Concerns for his safety are heightened by the fact that he was previously arrested in 1990 and spent a year and a half in the "ghost houses" of the NISS, where he was subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. (ibid)

According to the UN Media Monitoring report from the *UN Mission in Sudan* page 8 notes

Asked about Nafie's growing influence, one Sudanese official said, "To say the truth, Nafie is now No. 1. He seems to be doing everything."

Nafie's ascent is all the more surprising because he lacks the usual traits that spell success in Sudan. He has no formal military training, though there are rumors of a stint in Iran. His Islamist credentials pale compared with other ideologues. As a politician, he's described as ham-fisted, unable to restrain a confrontational style that often alienates his audience.

This summer, when Nafie declared that Bashir was the best candidate for president "whether people like it or not," voters weren't sure whether that was an expression of confidence or a veiled threat.

Nafie, a former agriculture professor who was plucked to serve as head of intelligence and security from 1989 to 1995, has often played the "bad cop" in one of Africa's most powerful and long-lasting regimes. (UN Mission in Sudan (27 October 2008) *Sudan: "UNMIS Media Monitoring Report, 27 October 2008"*)

The report continues

"He was my interrogator," said Farouk Mohammed Ibrahim, a former University of Khartoum science professor and government critic who was arrested in 1989 and held in one of Sudan's notorious, secret "ghost houses" for 12 days.

"I was tortured, beaten, flogged in his presence," Ibrahim said. "He was administering the whole thing. He did it all in such a cool manner, as if he were sipping a coffee."

In his characteristic style, Nafie expressed no regrets, saying opposition activists at the time were planning counter-coups and civil war. "We were there to protect ourselves," he said with a shrug. "Definitely we were not there to play cards with them."

In his Khartoum office recently, Nafie, 61, deflected questions about his personal views or policy recommendations on Darfur and other hot-button issues, preferring to stay behind the ruling party's official line, which he says is reached by consensus. (ibid)

A report from the *US Department of State* in 2000 under the heading 'Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment' notes

There were reports that security forces continued to torture persons in "ghost houses," places where security forces detain government opponents incommunicado under harsh conditions for an indeterminate time with no supervision by the courts or other independent authorities with power to release the detainees. (US Department of State (25 February 2000) *Sudan: Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 1999*)

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints.

This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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UNHCR
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