

Hearings on Religious Persecution in Sudan: Adlan Abdelaziz Oral Testimony

February 15, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

MR. ABDELAZIZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to explain the situation in Sudan since June 1989.

I am a Sudanese citizen from the Northern region. My name is Adlan Abdelaziz, and I have experienced being arrested three times. I grew up in Sudan, and during the period from 1989 to 1995, I was badly beaten with rubber hose pipes and batons, punched on the face, and doused in cold water. For 4 days, I was kept standing on my feet in the first arrest. The instructions of the soldiers were: Do not allow him to sleep or even to have a nap.

I stayed incommunicado, in a secret detention center, commonly known in Sudan as "ghost house." I was released three times without charge or trial and have not been allowed access to a legal counsel.

Actually, since the NIF military coup toppled the pre-existing parliamentary Government in Sudan in June 1989, thousands of anti-military regime activities were detained without charge or trial for periods ranging from a few days to several months.

Sudanese from virtually all sectors of society, from Northern Sudan, the war-torn South, and now the Nuba Mountains, suffered human rights violations as the authorities continued to suppress political opposition.

During my detention periods, I met hundreds of detainees belonging to different political opposition groups, mainly the dominant three religious orders of Sudanese traditional Islam--the Ansar, the Khatmiya, and the Ansar El Sunna. Other small religious groups include the Republican Brothers and the Altakfeer group. Add to this were civilians and former and serving army officers who were suspected of a plot to overthrow the Government. As well, many other independent individuals were detained.

I left Sudan

accompanied by my family, as my wife is a U.S. citizen, for the United States of America in August 1996, and since then, I have been a keen observer of what is going on in my country, Sudan. I have documented information that until now, detainees are denied adequate health care. They are held incommunicado and are suffering inhuman torture while the Islamic Government is going on with its policies of the unannounced official arrest. Because of domestic protest and international community pressures, the detention centers were temporarily evacuated.

However, despite the regime's various maneuvers to secure the acceptance and consent of the international community, the Government's general policies and rules, including the unlimited power of the security forces, remains unchanged.

As most of you know, Sudan, like some other African countries, is a multicultural, multi-religious country. You notice that Ms. Ding and I are from the same country, yet we do not look alike, but that is common in many countries in Africa. This entails a minimum degree of cultural and religious tolerance.

Following independence, to some extent, there is some tolerance in Sudan--people live in peace, and people living under religious and cultural tolerance--but to the disadvantage of Sudan, after the NIF coup, there is religious intolerance in Sudan.

To be able to talk about this phenomenon, one has to be knowledgeable regarding both Islam, as such, and the National Islamic Front Party, which advocates Islam as the main source of its ideological setup.

Throughout more than four decades, the NIF considers itself, contrary to the other Islamic orders in Sudan, as having modern and better understanding of Islam. Consequently, they believe that they are the salvagers of mankind and are the only qualified religious party to navigate humanity from darkness of the devil to the brightness of paradise. Accordingly, everybody should listen and follow them. As such, they are the new fascism of the century.

No clues whatever in their Constitution indicates religious tolerance. I encountered three incidents during my detentions. In the first

detention, I met three people from Southern Sudan. They were Christians, and they had already undergone 3 months of arrest when I came. One of them announced that he switched to Islam. The security officers in the detention center celebrated that event, and 2 days later, they released him. The other two followed suit and were instantly released.

During my second arrest, I met one of the Republican Brothers Party members whose name was Elnagi Mohamed Ahmed Ramadan. It was known that the Republican Brothers had suspended their public activity following the assassination of their leader, the late Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, in 1983. Taha was assassinated by encouraged and deliberate plans of Nimeri's alliances at that time, the NIF, because he advocated different perspective of the Islamic texts. Elnagi was kept under arrest because he was outspokenly critical of the NIF regime.

During my third detention, I met Sheikh Mohamed Abdelkarim. He is a leader of an extremist Islamic group in Sudan known as Gamat Altakfeer, or the Altakfeer group. He was arrested because he declared that Turabi, the NIF leader, is such far from real premises of Islam. Abdelkarim is much more fundamentalist and extremist than Turabi, but religious fanaticism generates more fanaticism.

There are hundreds of examples testifying to the regime's policies of religious intolerance. Female students were flogged because they did not abide by the so-called Islamic dress as perceived by the NIF. Khogli Osman, a popular Sudanese singer, was murdered by an Islamic fundamentalist in the early nineties because he was not an Islamic singer.

It is true that there is no freedom of religious beliefs in Sudan. Also, there is no freedom of the press, on freedom of association, no freedom of organization, et cetera. In short, Sudan, under NIF Government rules, is a big detention camp for Sudanese.

Action must be taken to ensure that all those living in Sudan can enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights bodies must call publicly upon the Government to take all necessary steps to secure respect for human dignity. Further plans and policies have to be worked out and applied that would force the regime to abide by the international agreement and codes of human rights.

We should pay closer attention to that phenomenon in order to help rid the world of a scourge that has already gained control of Sudan and could threaten international peace and security.

Turabi was courageous enough and dared to declare in a public lecture just last Wednesday that the NIF regime was able to bring to political power some of its alliance in Africa by directly-funded election campaigns in their countries.

I conclude my statement by appealing to you that efforts must be redoubled to combat Islamic extremism which continues to kill innocent people in Sudan and elsewhere. The Sudanese NIF regime is still supporting and training other Sunni extremists from other countries. A fact to be emphasized is that Sunni extremists were not supported by Shea-dominated Iran. Iran is Shea; Sudan is Sunni. These are different schools of Islam. The majority of Muslims are Sunni. The only country that is ruled by Sunni extremists is Sudan. That is why the only safe haven for them will be the present Sudan.

Thank you.