

RAN #17

SUDAN

June 6, 2008

UPDATE on RAN #14 (April 25): Zimbabwean freelance journalist and internet writer Frank Chikowore has been released on bail after more than two weeks in prison. However, the charges of 'public violence' against him stand, and there are concerns that he will not receive a fair trial. The WIPC is also concerned about continuing attacks on the print media following the contested March 2008 elections. It calls on the authorities either to back up or drop the charges against Chikowore and to cease attacks against print journalists peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

SUDAN: Darfuri journalist Al-Ghali Yahya Shegifat detained since May 14 2008.

BACKGROUND: Al-Ghali Yahya Shegifat, journalist and president of the Association of Darfur Journalists, was initially briefly detained and reportedly ill-treated on May 12. Shegifat was re-arrested on May 14, held incommunicado until May 30 and remains imprisoned. It is feared he is at risk of further ill treatment. The WIPC of PEN Canada is calling for his release.

Al-Ghali Yahya Shegifat (32) was arrested in Khartoum as part of a government crackdown in which over 200 individuals were detained between May 9 and 16 and held incommunicado for two weeks. Those arrested are understood to have been accused of supporting the armed opposition group, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), which has been fighting Sudanese government forces in Darfur since 2003 and launched an attack on Khartoum for the first time on May 10. The arrests were reportedly arbitrary, made on the basis of people being or appearing to be from the Darfur region or on suspicion of having sheltered JEM members.

Some 50 have since been released but many of those still detained are reported to be held incommunicado at Kober prison and other national security detention facilities in Khartoum or at unknown locations. Shegifat was held incommunicado until May 29 or 30, when a lawyer was finally able to visit him. It is not known where he is being held or if he has been formally charged.

It is feared that Shegifat and the other detainees are at risk of torture and other ill treatment, or even extrajudicial killing. One of the detainees reportedly died in detention on May 19 as a result of internal bleeding caused by severe injuries. Shegifat is said to have suffered physical ill treatment during a previous arrest by national security agents on May 12.

TO REVIEW THE RAN FAQs: www.pencanada.ca/media/RAN_FAQs.pdf

Appeal letter:

Mr Abdel Basit Sabderat
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 302, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: +249 183 770883

Dear Minister,

I am writing today because I am a member of PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of International PEN, the writers organization with more than 140 centres in more than 100 countries.

I wish to protest the detention since May 14, 2008 of the journalist Al-Ghali Yahya Shegifat.

I join my colleagues around the world in urging the authorities either to charge Shegifat with a recognisable criminal offence or to release him immediately and unconditionally.

We are also asking for your assurance that while Shegifat remains in detention he will be treated humanely and not tortured or ill-treated.

I would be grateful for your urgent attention to the case of Al-Ghali Yahya Shegifat.

Yours truly,

[your signature and name]

Copies to:

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Federal Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2793, Khartoum, Sudan
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Salutation: Dear Minister

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Rapporteur, Advisory Council for Human Rights, Khartoum, Sudan
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