



Sudan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 April 2014

Sudan: Whether the Sudanese Government spies on Sudanese nationals who have applied for asylum abroad and in particular in European countries.

Sudan: Treatment of returned failed asylum-seekers in Sudan (do they face arrest, questioning, interrogation, detention, torture or inhuman treatment etc?)

An article from The Telegraph refers to allegations of Sudanese government agents spying on Sudanese refugees in Britain as follows:

“Another activist, who has applied for asylum, known only as Yassir said he was also held last January just months after attending an even in the House of Lords about Sudan descent in conflict in three restive provinces. He is convinced that the security agents at Khartoum airport were acting on intelligence gathered in London. ‘I think there are some refugees that are not genuine but have been sent here by the Mukhabarat (Sudan Security Services) to monitor the rest of us,’ he said. ‘They said they had sent me to London to make a human of me,’ he said. ‘They said ‘you are a black slave, you will never be the equivalent of an Arab. We sent you to the UK and you have come back brainwashed against us.’ ‘We believe there are government spies writhing the Sudanese community,’ said Kamal Kambal, an activist for the Nuba people, who are fighting for greater autonomy from Khartoum. ‘They knew the whole story of that meeting and used it against Yassir during his arrest.’” (The Telegraph (9 January 2013) *Sudanese ‘diplomats spying for agents that torture in Khartoum*)

An Agence France Presse report on the expulsion of a Sudanese diplomat from Norway states:

“Norway on Tuesday expelled a Sudanese diplomat posted in Oslo after Khartoum's embassy here was implicated in spying on Sudanese refugees in the Scandinavian country. "Today we summoned the charge d'affaires of the embassy," Norwegian foreign affairs ministry spokesman Kjetil Elsebutangen told AFP Tuesday. "We informed him that their diplomat's activity was incompatible with his diplomatic status and so we asked that he leave Norway," Elsebutangen said, specifying that he leave "quickly." Norway's intelligence agency PST on Tuesday announced the arrest of a 38-year-old Sudanese man suspected of covertly gathering information on Sudanese refugees in Norway and transmitting it to someone at the Oslo embassy.” (Agence France Presse (9 October 2012) *Norway expels Sudanese diplomat*)

A BBC News report states:

“Sudan has expelled a Norwegian diplomat from the country in a tit-for-tat row over spying allegations. The move was a response to Norway's expulsion on Tuesday of a Sudanese diplomat working in Oslo. He was suspected of spying on Sudanese refugees in Norway.” (BBC News (10 October 2012) *Sudan expels Norway diplomat in spying row*)

A briefing paper published by the UK-based NGO *Waging Peace*, in a section headed “Interrogation of returnees”, states:

“In June 2011, Waging Peace interviewed a Sudanese asylum seeker, with the pseudonym Mr. M. This man is a Darfuri who sought asylum in the UK in 2003. In 2004, his asylum application was rejected and he was returned to Khartoum. Upon his return, Mr. M was detained at the airport and questioned about his activities in the UK as well as wider Darfuri and other NCP opposition activity within the UK. Mr. M was moved to a ‘ghost house’, a NISS house of detention in Khartoum, where he spent the next one and a half years. Mr. M was then transferred to Kober prison near Khartoum, where he spent two years detained in the political wing. During his time in the ghost house, he was interrogated every two or three days by multiple NISS officers about his time in the UK, questioned on how money was being given to the rebels in Darfur from the UK and about the membership and content of meetings held by rebel groups in the UK. Mr. M refused to answer these questions and was accused of being a spy for the West. Once he was in Kober Prison, Mr. M’s interrogation became less frequent, tending to take place when significant events occurred in Darfur, though his questioning concerned similar themes. Eventually the NISS released Mr. M, without providing a reason for his long detention. He was asked to refrain from political activity and required to sign in at the security headquarters in Khartoum on a weekly basis. Violating this agreement, Mr. M moved to an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Darfur. He stayed there for a year and a half before being re-captured by the NISS along with his wife while they were participating in a political meeting in 2009. He was then transferred to another ghost house, where he was kept for a further two months. He has now made it back to the UK, and his current asylum claim is pending.” (Waging Peace (4 August 2011) *The Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service*)

In a section headed “Conclusion” this paper states:

“Returning Sudanese asylum seekers from the UK to Sudan in and of itself constitutes a significant threat to their safety at the hands of the NISS, and in the worst instances can result in death. Claiming asylum abroad is considered an act of regime defiance and, as such, the process of applying for documentation brings an individual to the attention of the NISS. Furthermore, the NISS uses information gathered through an advanced security service network to incriminate detainees, making the risk of imprisonment for failed UK asylum cases high. Detainees are then held without warrant, record, trial or representation, often severely tortured and their lives threatened, in prison conditions that are unacceptable. They are sometimes released only on the basis that they gather information on rebel activity and return to the NISS to be re-detained should they not provide ‘satisfactory’ answers. With this in mind, returning a Sudanese asylum seeker from the UK can, in the worst cases, amount to sending them to their death, and even in more favourable cases, constitutes a considerable threat to their safety and well-being.” (ibid)

See also a report published by *Waging Peace* which describes the interrogation of Sudanese asylum seekers in the UK by Sudanese officials as follows:

“According to the asylum seekers' testimony the Sudanese Embassy interviewers appeared to possess confidential information about the interviewees. If this is the case, it would constitute a serious breach of confidentiality by the UKBA and may amount to a breach of Section 13(3) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 whereby the Secretary of State must not disclose whether the person concerned has made a claim for asylum in providing identification data. At least one of the interviewees claimed he was offered a financial bribe by the Embassy officials to encourage him to answer their questions. The conduct of the interviews placed the attending asylum seekers in an excessively intimidating position, putting them in front of the very people from whom they are seeking political asylum with no third party witnesses or protection.” (Waging Peace (September 2011) *“The Border Agency are playing a game to scare us”*, p.4)

This report also points out:

“However, interviewees were asked for information clearly in excess of that required to obtain travel documentation and verify nationality, including previous jobs held in Sudan and the whereabouts of family members in Sudan. Such information is extremely sensitive and potentially dangerous. Answering such questions not only potentially endangers the interviewees, but their families back in Sudan and indeed entire areas in Sudan where these people live. The Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) is perhaps the most powerful wing of the Government of Sudan, with no checks on its authority to arrest and detain anyone perceived to be at odds with the incumbent regime. Their brutal targeting of individuals who are in opposition to the state is well documented.” (ibid, p.4)

A *Waging Peace* report, in a section headed “Excerpt from testimony of Mr M”, states:

“[Mr M was detained for one-and-a-half years in a ‘Ghost House’, a National Security Service House, in Khartoum, before being transferred to Kober prison, where he was held for a further two years before being released. During his detention in the Ghost House Mr M was interrogated and tortured every two to three days, each time by two or three National Intelligence Staff]. Mr M was repeatedly asked about his activities whilst in the UK. He was asked how money was being given to the rebels in Darfur from the UK and who provided funds. He was asked how the rebels got hold of weapons, and how money and weapons got into Darfuri rebel hands from Chad. He was asked about meetings in the UK; who participated in them and what was discussed at them. Mr M refused to answer these questions or answered with ‘I don’t know’. He was accused of being a spy for the West. [Mr M claims that he experienced similar questioning and torture in Kober prison.]” (Waging Peace (September 2012) *The Danger of Returning Home: The perils facing Sudanese immigrants when they go back to Sudan*, p.14)

In a section headed “Excerpt from testimony of Mr A.” this report states:

“[Following his first arrest at the airport in July 2009, Mr A spent ten days in a cell in Karfuri in a building he believed to be the NISS headquarters in Khartoum. He was questioned three to five times a day.] Mr A was questioned about why he went to Germany, and what he did there. When he responded that he emigrated to improve his living conditions, his interrogators told him that they didn’t believe him, and that he didn’t need to go to Germany to improve himself. Mr A was questioned about Sudanese in Germany; what they were doing there and whether they were working, studying or claiming asylum. He was told that if he wasn’t honest and didn’t tell them the truth, he wouldn’t go to court, but that the authorities would ‘make him disappear’... [On his second arrest in November 2010, Mr A was taken to a room in the airport office. He was subjected to questioning for two hours. Two officers remained in the office questioning him throughout the interview, whilst two others came in and out of the questioning]. He was questioned about why he went to London, to which he answered that he went to accompany his mother for medical treatment. They didn’t believe this and accused him of being in the UK for other purposes.” (ibid, p.15)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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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Waging Peace