



The Law Society of
Upper Canada | Barreau
du Haut-Canada

May 10, 2017

H.E. Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir
President of the Republic of the Sudan
Office of the President
People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan

Office of the Treasurer

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Your Excellency:

Re: Detention of lawyer Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki

I write on behalf of the Law Society of Upper Canada* to voice our grave concern over the detention of lawyer Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki. When serious issues of apparent injustice to lawyers and the judiciary come to our attention, we speak out.

Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki is a human rights lawyer known for providing legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses, youth and students in El Fasher in particular.

The Law Society's information states that on December 27, 2016, the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service ("NISS") arrested Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki at her office in El Fasher, Darfur. Following her arrest, she was quickly relocated to Khartoum and deprived of all contact with her family. Authorities did not notify the Bar Association about her arrest as stipulated in the Sudanese Advocates Law. Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki continues to be held without charge and/or disclosure of the reasons for her detention, and with limited contact with her family.

The Law Society is deeply concerned about Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki's situation and urges Your Excellency to comply with Sudan's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Article 18 states:

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

The Law Society urges the Government of Sudan to:

- a. immediately and unconditionally release Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki;
- b. immediately and unconditionally withdraw any and all charges against Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki;
- c. guarantee all of the procedural rights that should be accorded to Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki in accordance with her right to a fair trial;
- d. ensure that Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki is afforded regular access to her lawyer and family;
- e. put an end to all acts of harassment against Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki and all other human rights lawyers in Sudan;

- f. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Tasneem Ahmed Taha El Zaki and all other human rights lawyers in Sudan;
- g. ensure that all lawyers in Sudan can carry out their professional duties and activities without fear of reprisals, physical violence or other human rights violations; and
- h. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours truly,

Paul B. Schabas
Treasurer

**The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

cc:

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Hina Jilani, President, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights
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Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

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Marina Brilman, International Human Rights Policy Adviser, The Law Society of England and Wales