Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR’s Refworld website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the Knowledge and Information Management Unit.

**SDN105767.E**

Sudan: The Sudanese Congress Party, including origin, structure, leadership, objectives, and activities; requirements and procedures to become a member of the party, including membership cards; treatment of party members and supporters by authorities (2015-February 2017)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

The Sudan Tribune, a Paris-based news website that aims to "promote plural information, democratic and free debate on Sudan" (Sudan Tribune n.d.), reports that the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP) [SCoP (Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016)] was established in January 1986, with its first chairman being Abdel Mageed Imam; its second chairman was Ibrahim al-Sheikh; and it recently elected its third, Omer al-Digair (Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016).

In a July 2015 Sudan Tribune article, Khalid Omer Yousif, "former Secretary-General of the [SCP] and its current deputy chairman for external relations," states that the origins of the group date back to the founding of the Congress of Independent Students (CIS) on 7 July 1977 (Sudan Tribune 20 July 2015). The same source states that the CIS then founded the National Congress political party in 1986 under Imam, but that due to the political conditions after the 1989 coup, the party suffered a "near demise" in the 1990s (Sudan Tribune 20 July 2015). He further states that the party was renamed the Sudanese Congress Party in 2005, and its president at the time, Ibrahim al-Sheikh, competed in the 2010 national elections (Sudan Tribune 20 Jul. 2015). The same source further adds that this participation enabled the party to construct a broad base of supporters across the greater Kordofan region ... Building on its success in Kordofan, the party took further steps by spreading its influence to other parts of Sudan, especially in Darfur states, and contributing massively to the opposition's political actions whether individually or collectively during the period of the former opposition coalition the National Consensus Forces and later with its partners in the Sudan Call Alliance. (Sudan Tribune 20 Jul. 2015)

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS), an NGO that monitors human rights in Sudan, and is headquartered in New York with offices in London and Africa (ACJPS n.d.), describes the SCP as "a political opposition party registered in Sudan, which has seen a resurgence in recent years due to its vocal calls for mobilization for popular demonstrations, and public criticism of the ruling National Congress Party" (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016). Similarly, a December 2016 article from Radio Dabanga, a Netherlands-based news radio station focused on Darfur (Radio Dabanga n.d.), states that the SCP "is one of the most active opposition parties in Sudan since its members began their public campaign against the government's oppressive policies in several Sudanese towns last year" (Radio Dabanga 1 Dec. 2016).

The Sudan Tribune describes the party as a "center-left reformist party," and notes that it "calls for social
justice and separation of religion and state" and that it "also believes that peaceful transfer of power is the only way to stability and unity of the country" (Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016).

Khalid Omer Yousif indicates that the SCP "can be classified alongside the social democratic parties around the world" (Sudan Tribune 20 Jul. 2015). He describes the party's "ideas" as follows:

[The] construction of a secular state in lieu of the one that has existed since independence by restructuring its institutions to truly reflect the reality of Sudan's ethnic, cultural and societal diversity as well as reforming the country's economic setup by dismantling the centralized economic structure that the Sudanese state inherited from its colonial predecessor and chart a different course based on balanced development with a clearcut set of state social responsibilities. (Sudan Tribune 20 Jul. 2015)

Information on the Sudanese Congress Party's structure could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1 Leadership

Sources report the following SCP members with a position in the party:

- Omar Yousif Al-Digair [Omer al-Digair; Omer Yousef Eldeegir], "chairman" (Radio Dabanga 7 Nov. 2016; Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016);
- Ibrahim al-Sheikh [El Sheikh], "former head" (Radio Dabanga, 7 Nov. 2016) or "former chairperson" (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016), or former chairman (Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016);
- Khalid Omer [Omar] Yousif [Youssef], "Vice President" (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016) or "deputy chairman" (Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016);
- Mastor Ahmed Mohamed [Mastoor Ahmed], "Secretary General" (Radio Dabanga 7 Nov. 2016; ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016; Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016);
- Abdelmunim Omar [Abdel Moneim Omer], "head of the external office" (Sudan Tribune 8 Feb. 2017), or "head of the SCP office abroad" (Radio Dabanga 10 Jan. 2017), or Acting President (Radio Dabanga 1 Dec. 2016);
- Abu-Bakr Yousef [Abu Bakr Youssef], Political Secretary (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016; Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016);
- Abdallah Shams Al-Koun, Deputy Media Secretary (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016) or "Deputy Information Secretary" (Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016);
- Alsiad Abdelgaioum [Abdel-Qayoum Awad el-Sid], "Chairman of the central council" (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016; Sudan Tribune 9 Nov. 2016);
- Ahmed Abu Zaid, chairperson of Eastern Nile section (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016); and
- Noureldien Salah Eldien Mahmoud, Vice President of the Khartoum state section (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016).

1.2 Relationship with Other Opposition Parties

An International Crisis Group report notes that the SCP is a member party of the National Consensus Forces (NCF), "a coalition of Sudanese opposition parties" created in 2010 (International Crisis Group 11 March 2015, 14). Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) notes that it is a signatory to the Democratic Alternative Charter (DAC), an initiative of some of the NCF parties, which committed the signing parties to use "peaceful means" for the removal of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and to help create a "civil democratic state" (UN 6 July 2012).

The Sudan Tribune further reports that the SCP is an internal group member of the Sudan Call [1] (Sudan Tribune 21 Jan. 2017). The Sudan Tribune reports that in late September 2016 the SCP was among five Sudan Call parties suspended by the NCF over differences regarding an African Union-led peace process in the country (Sudan Tribune 2 Oct. 2016). The same article further reports that the five suspended parties subsequently withdrew from the NCF (Sudan Tribune 2 Oct. 2016). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this response.

2. Membership Procedures and Membership Cards

Information on the Sudanese Congress Party's procedures to become a member, or information on membership cards, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the
3. Treatment of Party Members and Supporters by Authorities

3.1 Lead-up to April 2015 Elections

The Guardian reports that the SCP called for a boycott of the April 2015 elections in Sudan (The Guardian 29 Apr. 2015). An April 2015 article by the Pan African News Agency (Panapress), a Dakar-based news agency whose website is an "information portal on Africa" (Panapress n.d.), indicates that the Head of the SCP in Sodari, North Kordofan, called for a "general boycott of the election" (Panapress 15 Jan. 2015). Radio Dabanga indicates that the SCP was one of the opposition parties that declared they would boycott the 2015 elections (Radio Dabanga 9 Apr. 2015). Sources report that the main major opposition parties boycotted the elections (Freedom House 2016; AI 24 Feb. 2016; FIDH 12 Apr. 2015; US 13 Apr. 2016, 56), including the SCP (US 13 Apr. 2016, 56; Human Rights Watch 28 Apr. 2015).

Regarding the treatment of SCP members in the lead-up to the April 2015 elections, the US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 indicates that the government continued to arrest or temporarily detain opposition members, especially those belonging to or affiliated with the Sudan Congress Party ... Detentions were especially frequent in the period before national elections in April. (US 13 Apr. 2016, 18-19)

The same source further notes that "Members of the Sudanese Congress Party and 'Irhal' ('Leave') Campaign, which advocated for an election boycott, were prevented from holding public discussions" (US 13 Apr. 2016, 40) and that "authorities temporarily detained without charge" activists who supported the Irhal campaign, including members of the SCP (US 13 Apr. 2016, 46).

ACJPS similarly reports that members of the SCP and factions of the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Movement – North (SPLM – N), have been targeted for arrest or detention by the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) in the lead-up to the April 2015 elections (ACJPS 17 Apr. 2015). Specifically, ACJPS reports the following arrests of SCP members in April 2015:

- April 10: Anas Abdullah and Mohamed Al Fatih, who were arrested by the NISS in el Gedarif in eastern Sudan. Anas Abdullah was released a "few hours" after being arrested, after interrogation and being "ordered not to engage in any elections related advocacy," while Al Fatih "remains in detention with no known charges";
- April 12: Taha Alfadih, Mohamed Yousif, and Ahmed Altayeb who were arrested by the NISS in Aldewin town, White Nile state, and Adlam Jamal Aldien, Shoma Hamid Zakaria, and Taha Al Fatih who were arrested by the NISS in Alsoki town in Sennar state (ACJPS 17 Apr. 2015).

3.2 July-December 2015

Sources indicate that according to the SCP, three SCP members were given 20 lashes in July 2015 for disturbing the peace (AFP 6 July 2015; Canadian Press 7 July 2015). BBC cites a 9 July 2015 editorial from "Sudanese government newspaper Sudan Vision" as stating that "the political secretary of the [SCP] and two other members yesterday received 20 lashes in front of the Omdurman Criminal Court" (BBC 9 July 2015). The same sources adds that they had been convicted of "disturbing the public order" after being detained when they "criticised the policies of the ruling National Congress Party in public" (BBC 9 July 2015). Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports that the conviction was for the members having called for the release of imprisoned colleagues in April (AFP 6 July 2015). The Canadian Press cites the SCP as stating that a criminal court found the members guilty of "disturbing public order by calling for the boycott of April's presidential elections" (Canadian Press 7 July 2015).

Amnesty International (AI) reports that, in August 2015, NISS personnel prevented an SCP "political symposium" from taking place, and arrested three senior party members (AI 24 Feb. 2016). Human Rights Watch reports that during August 2015, at least 17 opposition party members were arrested, detained, and interrogated by security agents in Sudan, and that most of those arrested were affiliated with the SCP (Human Rights Watch 28 Aug. 2015). Sources similarly note that 17 activists, most of whom were affiliated with the SCP, were detained in August 2015 (Freedom House 2016; US 13 Apr. 2016, 40), in "many cases following meetings or symposiums during which political discussions were held" (US 13 Apr. 2016, 40). Human Rights Watch indicates that the arrests in 2015 included the following people:
Khalid Omer Yousif, "a leader in the Congress Party" who was arrested in the al-Jereif suburb of Khartoum on 5 August;

Magdi Okasha and Widad Abdelrahman Derwish, SCP members, who were arrested on 8 August, after attending "recent public events";

Wifag Mohamed Gorashi, a student at Khartoum University, who was arrested and questioned about her links to the SCP on 17 August, after speaking at a public event;

Mohamed Osman and Bashir Mohamed, university students who had attended a Congress Party public gathering, who were arrested on 17 August in the El Obeid market in North Kordofan;

Eight SCP members who had attended an SCP symposium at the party's Khartoum headquarters, who were arrested on 22 August by "about 15 security agents armed with pistols and Kalashnikovs"; two of those arrested sustained head injuries after having been beaten during their arrest;

Mohamed Noor Terab and Mohammed Elraddi Salim, SCP members who had attended the same symposium in Khartoum, who were arrested on 22 August; they were beaten during their interrogations (Human Rights Watch 28 Aug. 2015).

3.3 2016

Without providing further detail, sources indicate that a member of the student chapter of the SCP faces charges of premeditated murder for allegedly killing a police officer during protests in April 2016 (The Citizen 16 Feb. 2017; Sudan Tribune 15 Feb. 2017).

Sources report that, in November 2016, the Sudanese government announced austerity measures (The Guardian 10 Nov. 2016; Radio Dabanga 19 Dec. 2016), which "led to huge increases in the prices of fuel, electricity, food, and medicines" (Radio Dabanga 19 Dec. 2016). ACJPS reports that "the austerity measures have increased fuel prices by up to 30% and drastically increased prices on basic commodities in the context of widespread poverty and corruption" (ACJPS 16 Jan. 2017). Amnesty International states that "activists and members of the political opposition have been protesting against the rise in fuel, electricity, transport, food, and medicine costs" associated with the austerity measures (AI 28 Nov. 2016). The Guardian reports that the SCP criticised the austerity measures, and condemned their timing (The Guardian 10 Nov. 2016). Sources indicate that a three-day strike occurred in Khartoum from 27 to 29 November 2016 to protest the austerity measures (Radio Dabanga 11 Dec. 2016; Sudan Tribune 10 Dec. 2016). The Peninsula, a Qatari English newspaper, notes that the SCP supported calls by opposition groups and activists for a three-day strike, stating "the [strike] call was a result of a movement that started years ago to overthrow [the Sudanese] regime" (The Peninsula 26 Nov. 2016).

Amnesty International indicates that "in the wake of mounting public dissatisfaction and sporadic protests" against the austerity measures, beween 4 November and 27 November 2016, "at least" 15 SCP members were arrested, with their "whereabouts unknown and [having had] no access to lawyers or family members" (AI 28 Nov. 2016). These SCP members include Omar al-Digair, Khalid Omer Yousif, and Mastor Ahmed Mohamed (AI 28 Nov. 2016). The same source states that another 19 SCP members were arrested and released during the same period (AI 28 Nov. 2016). Radio Dabanga similarly reports that the NISS detained the president of the SCP, the Deputy President, the Secretary-General, and 22 other members of the SCP following "limited demonstrations" against the price increases in "several" Sudanese towns (Radio Dabanga 17 Nov. 2016). An article in The Guardian similarly indicates that more than 20 SCP members were arrested in November 2016 (The Guardian 11 Jan. 2017).

A 1 December 2016 ACJPS article reports that, "at least" 17 members of the SCP, who were arrested between 4 and 9 November 2016 following "public calls by the party for peaceful demonstrations" against the austerity measures, were still being held incommunicado by the NISS in Khartoum (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016). The same source lists the following SCP members as part of this group:

- Khalid Omer Yousef, who was arrested on 4 November 2016 from his home in Aljereif neighbourhood, Khartoum;
- Abdulla Shams Al-Koun Adam who was arrested on 4 November 2016 from an unknown location;
- Awad Alsiad Abdelgaioum, who was arrested on 6 November 2016 from his home in Alshabia neighbourhood of Khartoum Bahri (he was allowed a family visit on 17 November);
- Abu-Bakr Yousef, who was arrested on 7 November 2016 from his home in Khartoum III;
Mastor Ahmed Mohamed, who was arrested on 7 November 2016 outside SCP headquarters in Shambat neighbourhood Khartoum Bahri;

Suleiman Khalifa Dinar, who was arrested on 7 November 2016 in the Alkakla neighbourhood of Khartoum;

Noor Eldien Babiki, who was arrested on 7 November 2016 in Khartoum III;

Ibrahim El Sheikh Abdulrahman who was arrested on 7 November 2016 from his home in Almoqrataben, Khartoum Bahri;

Omar Yousif Al-Digair who was arrested on 9 November 2016 from his home in Omdurman (he was allowed a family visit on 17 November 2016);

Yasin Salah Shashog, who was arrested on 7 November 2016 from his home in Khartoum III;

Ahmed Abu Zaid, who was arrested 8 November 2016 from Elhaj Yousef neighbourhood of Khartoum Bahri;

Udia Hamdan Yousef, who was arrested on 8 November 2016 in Alnuhod, West Kordofan; and

Noureldien Salah Eldien Mahmoud, who was arrested on 9 November 2016 from his home in Altaief neighborhood, Khartoum (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016).

ACJPS further states that four members of the SCP’s student wing, the Independent Student Congress (ISC), were arrested as well: Omer Kamal who was arrested on 7 November 2016 at an unknown location; and Abdulrahem Mustafa Abdulrahem, Basim Ismail, and Alfatif Abdallah, who were arrested on 9 November 2016 outside the Faculty of Arts of Karima University, Northern state (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016). ACJPS further reports that another eight members had been arrested between 4 November and 8 November 2016, but were released "shortly after" (ACJPS 1 Dec. 2016). Radio Dabanga cites an SCP spokesperson as stating that 16 SCP members had been released, but that leader al-Digair and Khaled Omer Yousif were still being held (Radio Dabanga 26 Dec. 2016).

Sources report that 19 December 2016 was a "day of disobedience" (BBC 19 Dec. 2016) or a "one-day civil disobedience general strike" (Radio Dabanga 21 Dec. 2016). Radio Dabanga reports that the SCP supported the call for civil disobedience, stating in a press statement that it "does not only express the rejection of the regime, but shows an overall mobilisation against it" (Radio Dabanga 9 Dec. 2016). The same source notes that detentions were reported "across Sudan" in response to the 19 December 2016 civil disobedience actions, including the arrest by the NISS of El Mahi Mohamed Suleiman, "the local head" of the SCP in Sennar state (Radio Dabanga 21 Dec. 2016).

Radio Dabanga further cites Khalid Omer, SCP Deputy President, as stating in an interview that during his 54 day detention he "witnessed detained students being tortured" in Kober prison, including not-politically affiliated students and "some" SCP students (Radio Dabanga 30 Dec. 2016). The same source further cites Khaled Omer as stating that "some detainees of the SCP students [were] subjected to severe torture" (Radio Dabanga 30 Dec. 2016). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this response.

3.4 January-February 2017

Sources indicate that Abdelmounim Omar was detained at Khartoum Airport in January 2017 (Sudan Tribune 8 Feb. 2017; Radio Dabanga 10 Jan. 2017). ACJPS indicates that, to their knowledge, 17 detainees are held incomunicado, including two SCP members: Malek Abu Al Assan who was arrested on 28 December 2016, and acting chairperson Abdelmounim Omar, who was arrested 8 January 2017 at Khartoum Airport and who was prevented from travelling (ACJPS 15 Jan. 2017). The Sudan Tribune further reports that Abdelmounim Omar was released on 7 February 2017 (Sudan Tribune 8 Feb. 2017).

Sources report that, in January 2017, leading members of the Sudan Call, including the SCP’s al-Digair, were prevented by the Sudanese government from flying to Paris for a Sudan Call meeting (Sudan Tribune 16 Jan. 2017; Panapress 15 Jan. 2017) or "a series of meetings in the Sudan Appeal Leadership Council ... to develop 'new practical steps' for the implementation of the Sudan Appeal document" (Radio Dabanga 15 Jan. 2017).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.
Note

[1] "Sudan Call" [Sudan Appeal] is an agreement signed by the NCF, the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), "an alliance of the main rebel movements," the National Umma Party, and the Sudanese Civil Society Initiative (Radio Dabanga 3 Dec. 2014). It called for "the end of war, dismantlement of the one-party state, achievement of a comprehensive peace and democratic transition in the country (Sudan Tribune 3 Dec. 2014).

References


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Canadian Press. 7 July 2015. "In Rare Political Sentence, 3 Sudan Politicians Flogged for Endorsing Election Boycott." (Factiva)

The Citizen. 16 February 2017. "Trial of Sudanese Student Accused of Killing Policeman to Resume." (Factiva)


Panapress. 15 January 2017. "Les opposants politiques soudanais interdits de se rendre à Paris." (Factiva)
Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral Sources:** Professor of Sociology, University of Calgary; Sudanese Congress Party.

**Internet sites, including:** AllAfrica; Bertelsmann Stiftung; ecoi.net; Transparency International; UN – Refworld, ReliefWeb.

Tips on how to use this search engine.