**RAPAR**

***The Manchester-based Human Rights organisation working with displaced people***

PRESS RELEASE

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**UKBA TRIES TO REMOVE HUNGER STRIKER WHO HAS BEEN MEDICALLY ASSESSED AS UNFIT TO FLY**

The Manchester based Human Rights organisation RAPAR has condemned the UK Border Agency's decision to issue removal directions for Friday, December 16th, to a man who has been on hunger strike for 35 days and has been medically assessed as being unfit to fly.

RAPAR and Medical Justice are working with Mortada Mohamed Ahmed, from Eastern Sudan, who has not eaten since 9th November. Medical Justice says that an independent doctor who has been visiting and monitoring Mortada has assessed him as unfit to fly or to be detained and has said he should be in hospital.

Three days ago, Mortada's friend Mohamed, who is also from East Sudan, contacted RAPAR for help. Mortada, aged 36, is currently in the medical wing at Colnbrook Detention Centre near Heathrow Airport.

When RAPAR established direct telephone contact with Mortada on Monday, he said he would rather die here in the UK than be returned to the Sudan from where he fled in 2005 during the Port Sudan Massacre. He began his hunger strike after he was detained and told by the Home Office that he was going to be sent back to Sudan. “I started the hunger strike because I do not have any choice” he added.

Mortada’s remaining brother and sister are living in Saudi Arabia - the rest of his family died in the Sudan.

On Monday, RAPAR faxed an authorisation form to Colnbrook Detention Centre for Mortada to sign and return. This form would give RAPAR permission to share information about him. The form has not yet been given to Mortada but, within 24 hours of the fax being sent, the UKBA served Mortada with removal directions.

The removal directions are for this Friday, 16th December at 09:30 on Gulf Air via Bahrain to Sudan. “It is illegal to attempt to make anyone fly after day 30 if they are on hunger strike, so why are the UKBA attempting to do this?” a RAPAR spokesperson asked.

James Fallah Williams of RAPAR, who was himself on hunger strike for 19 days earlier this year said: “When I spoke to Mortada’s lawyer yesterday he told me he was ‘on the case’. I have just spoken with Mortada today and he sounds very weak.”

A spokesperson for Medical Justice who has seen Mortada in Colnbrook said: “An independent doctor who visited him, and has been monitoring him since, has assessed him as not fit to fly or to be detained and that he should be taken to hospital for further assessment.”

Dr Abuamna, a leading member of the Eastern Sudanese diaspora who is based in Manchester, said: “It would be unsafe for Mortada to go back to the Sudan now because there are so many human rights violations in Eastern Sudan. The government has been targeting and detaining activists from the Beja Congress, including ex-fighters from the Eastern Sudan.”

For further information see: <http://www.sudaneseonline.com/english/>

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