

## **MOSSAAD MOHAMED ALI**

Mossaad Mohamed Ali is a lawyer and human rights defender based in Nyala, South Darfur. He is currently Coordinator of the Amel Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture in South Darfur which provides legal aid and medical and psycho-social assistance to victims of torture and sexual violence and those at risk of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments including the death penalty and amputations (see below for more detail of the work of the Centre). Since 2000 Mossaad has been a legal aid officer with the Sudan Organisation Against Torture representing victims of human rights violations and those facing severe punishment in local and national court proceedings and monitoring and documenting the welfare of those subject to arbitrary detention.

Mossaad has been a lawyer, human rights defender and environmentalist since 1995. Between 1996 and 1998 he served as Secretary General of the Sudanese Society for Environmental Protection in South Darfur. Prior to taking up his current position with SOAT in 2000, Mossaad provided essential free legal aid and assistance to political detainees and prisoners in South Darfur through his private legal practice in Nyala at a time when there were few options for these most vulnerable individuals. Since joining SOAT Mossaad has been able to work full time to provide legal advice and representation to hundreds facing human rights violations in Darfur. In recent years this has included assistance to those who have suffered the most egregious crimes, such as arbitrary detention, rape and forced displacement, providing a lifeline to the hundreds of thousands of war-affected who have thronged the camps for the displaced around Nyala since the war escalated.

In addition to his work as a legal representative and as a human rights monitor, Mossaad has conducted trainings on human rights and Sudanese law for leaders of displaced communities, law enforcement officers, lawyers, judges, and national NGO workers. Mossaad holds a degree in law from the Cairo University (Khartoum Branch) and is a member of the Democratic Front of Sudanese Lawyers.

For over ten years Mossaad has been an outspoken critic of the violations of the human rights of the most vulnerable in Darfur, both within Sudan and internationally. His courageous work and constant vocal witness to the oppression of displaced and war-affected in Darfur has not been dimmed by the grave personal danger to which he has been subject, in particular, surveillance and harassment and frequent detention by the security services in Darfur.

### **The Amel Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, Nyala, South Darfur**

The Amel Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture has offices in Khartoum, Nyala and el Fashir and provides legal aid to victims of torture and sexual violence and represents individuals at risk of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments including the death penalty and amputations. Specialist medical treatment and psychosocial support is also offered to torture and rape survivors to enable them to rebuild their lives with dignity.

The conflict in Darfur has been characterised by widespread and targeted attacks on civilians and arbitrary arrests, detention and torture of individuals perceived to be affiliated to the rebel movements, often solely on account of their ethnic origin. Hundreds of individuals in Darfur are detained on suspicion of their affiliation with the rebel groups operating in the region. Commonly, such detainees are charged under articles in the Sudanese penal code which carry cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments, and are denied access to legal counsel. Where detained in security facilities, detainees are held incommunicado and at extremely high risk of torture.

In October 2004 a branch of the Amel Centre was opened in Nyala, south Darfur, in response to the alarming deterioration in the human rights situation in the region. The majority of

clients who receive legal aid and medical treatment at the Amel centre in Darfur have been arrested by government security personnel under emergency laws, detained without charge or trial and subjected to torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

As the conflict has unfolded, the Amel centre has documented critical information on the human rights violations that were occurring on a widespread and systematic scale. Since the centre opened in 2004, staff there have documented hundreds of cases of violations and filed complaints with the local and national authorities. Local people find out about the services offered at the Amel centre through word of mouth and information provided by volunteer networks living in the camps for the internally displaced in the region, where Amel staff visit frequently.

Getting information to the outside world about the violations occurring in Darfur has been fraught with problems. Government censorship, clampdowns on freedom of expression, travel restrictions (imposed by central government) and severe and targeted intimidation of human rights workers have not deterred the staff at the Amel centre from continuing to research, document and develop networks of advocates and medical professionals to provide urgent care and protection for the vulnerable civilian population.

### **Sudanese Organisation Against Torture (SOAT)**

The Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT) is an independent non-governmental human rights organisation established in 1993 working in Sudan and UK and has members worldwide. SOAT primary objective is preventing torture and challenging impunity.

SOAT works to rehabilitate Sudanese survivors of torture; provides legal assistance to survivors and individuals threatened with inhumane and degrading punishments; human rights education; researches, documents and campaigns against human rights abuses in Sudan on a national and international level.

In Darfur, SOAT provides essential support to the Amel Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture on the ground, including acting as an amplifier for voices inside Sudan which may not otherwise be heard.