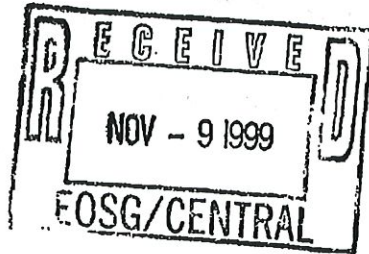


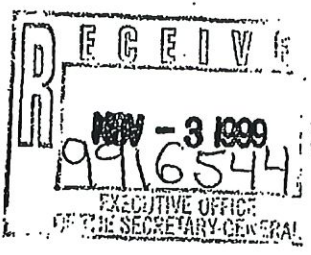
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STR
Amnesty Int'l
HR/general
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Mr Kofi Annan
The Secretary General
United Nations
Office of the Secretary General
United Nations
New York 10017
USA



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(on request)
Can you raise the
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if needed I shall
follow-up with Heur
1 November 1999
[Signature]

Dear Secretary-General,

I have the honour to bring to your attention the situation of Mr Aref Mohamed Aref.
In a letter addressed to Amnesty International on 27 October 1999, Mr Aref, a lawyer and a Djibouti citizen, sent a distress call to Amnesty International to assist him in his present ordeal.

Maitre Aref, a prisoner of conscience in 1991-1992 has been the leading (and virtually the only) human rights lawyer in Djibouti for some years. He is well-known in French and African legal circles and has been an Amnesty International delegate at conferences on the International Criminal Court and to observe a genocide trial in Rwanda. He is aged 46, married with three children. He does not belong to any opposition party but is known as an outspoken critic of human rights violations by the government and of the failures of the Djiboutian judicial system.

On 5 December 1998 the Djibouti security authorities stopped him from boarding a plane to Paris to attend the Human Rights Defenders Summit. They confiscated his passport, without giving any reason. He had previously attended the African Human Rights Defenders Conference in South Africa in November 1998, where he made important contributions to the discussions. He is a member of the Follow-up Committee and the Eastern Africa Regional network.

Thereafter the authorities revived an old case against him dating back 1994 in which he was accused of fraud (escroquerie), in connection with a civil case in which he had been involved. He was subsequently imprisoned after an unfair trial which was full of irregularities. During the trial he was denied the defence counsel of his choice. His appeal was thrown out by the Supreme Court in a brief session with no advance notice or consultation with his legal representative. In May 1999 he was released early from a six-month prison sentence and suspended from the Bar for 5 years, an unfair and politically-motivated action.

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His suspension has prevented him from defending political prisoners of all opinions or practising his profession and earning his livelihood. Since then - according to Mr Aref - he is under imminent threat of detention and feels his life is in danger following an interview with a team of French TV reporters a few weeks ago. Mr Aref says that his ardent wish is to find protection even outside of Djibouti for his family and himself, before it becomes too late.

We would be very grateful if you can use your good offices to intervene on his behalf as soon as possible.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pierre Sané', written in a cursive style.

Pierre Sané
Secretary General
Amnesty International