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745 W. 00 / 3-156

DECLASSIFIED SPATCH

Authority AND 897411

By NS NARA Date 4/8/08

FORM 127

DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

March 1, 1956

REF : 1956-3-1, Azhari, Kadi, Death

|                    |       |         |             |       |        |
|--------------------|-------|---------|-------------|-------|--------|
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| ACTION             | NEA-4 | I N F O | Emb-2 EMB-5 | 10-4  | 4/0/56 |
|                    |       |         | Emb-3       | Emb-2 | Emb-2  |

SUBJECT: Kosti Incidents

Reference is made to Embassy telegrams 183 of February 21, 1956, and 188 of February 23, 1956, reporting the arrest of a large group of White Nile tenants and the subsequent deaths of a large number of these people by suffocation in an overcrowded jail.

Available information regarding the initial incident, the tenants demonstration and subsequent clash with the police, is not sufficiently clear to provide a basis for analysis. The second incident, the death by suffocation of some 190 of the arrested tenants, appears to have been a case of pure stupidity and administrative incompetence.

The initial incident apparently grew out of a clash between tenants and police when the former refused to make delivery of cotton unless certain of their demands were met. There has been speculation that the initial incident was caused by opposition elements within the National Government who desired to embarrass the Azhari leadership, and particularly to force Prime Minister Azhari to relinquish the post of Minister of Interior, which he also holds. There have been claims also that communist elements were responsible for the tenants' actions and for instigating the subsequent clash with the police. In any event the initial incident took place and the clash resulted in several deaths among the tenants and the police. Police reinforcements were dispatched and a large number of tenants and cultivators were arrested for creating disturbances and rioting.

The second incident, which resulted in the death of some 190 persons from among those arrested, appears to have been an unintentional accident resulting from poor police administration. Regardless of intentions, however, the second incident has called attention to the first and has resulted in a large number of so far orderly demonstrations in Khartoum and other towns in the Sudan. The advocates association consisting of some 25 members, including Opposition Leader Mohammed Ahmed Manggub and other prominent lawyers, marched to the office of the Council of Ministers and submitted a note to the Prime Minister (Azhari) holding that the Minister of the Interior (Azhari) in particular was responsible for the negligence which led to the death of the tenants in Kosti prison.

AEBeach/mmm

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REPORTER

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LWC

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

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Khartoum

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Pending the initial despatch copies of the official communiques issued by the Sudan Office of National Guidance to date. Newspaper accounts of the incident are somewhat more exaggerated but the communiques contain the essential hard facts.

*Arthur E. Beach*

Arthur E. Beach  
Charge d'Affaires

*AFH*

Enclosure:

As stated

cc: Cairo  
London

*[Handwritten signature]*

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