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South Sudanese pastor jailed after preaching at church in North Khartoum

Morning Star News (28.12.2014) - <http://morningstarnews.org/2014/12/south-sudanese-pastor-jailed-after-preaching-at-north-khartoum-church/> - Security personnel in Sudan have held a pastor from South Sudan since Dec. 21 after he delivered a sermon at an embattled North Khartoum church.

Agents from Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) arrested the Rev. Yat Michael of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church after Sunday worship concluded at Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church on Dec. 21, a source told Morning Star News. At press time he remained in jail without charges.

Police in North Khartoum on Dec. 2 beat, arrested and fined 38 Christians from the church after nearly two weeks of raiding and demolishing church property. They were released later that night.

Pastor Michael had been invited to encourage the congregation to stand firm amid persecution. Besides arrests, the North Khartoum church compound has been subject to demolition of buildings and part of its worship center as Muslim investors seek to take it over.

NISS is empowered to arrest Christians, South Sudanese and others considered undesirable in the Islamist state without charging them with any crime. After church leaders had given thanks to God for His Word, NISS agents entered the church compound and took Pastor Michael to their office in North Khartoum.

"We tried to visit him, but it was not possible as the security prevented us from doing so," a church leader told Morning Star News, adding that NISS personnel confiscated the pastor's mobile phone.

Authorities have tried to take a part of church compound, but the worship center remains open.

"The level of persecution has become too much for us in Sudan," a church leader said. "But God is good all the time; He will help His church face this persecution."

Police on Dec. 2 arrested members of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC)-affiliated congregation under Article 77 of the notorious Public Order Law of 1991, which gives police broad powers to arrest Christians and other lowly regarded people without cause, for creating a public disturbance. The Christians were released after being sentenced to pay a fine of \$250 each, sources said.

Five church leaders arrested on Nov. 25 were released that same night.

With Muslim investors laying claim to the land based on an agreement signed by a government-installed church committee that church leaders say did not legally represent the church, a bulldozer accompanied by security personnel and police knocked down a wall of the church and houses on Nov. 17-18. Christians formed a human barrier to face down further demolition attempts on Nov. 19-20.

One of the homes destroyed in the compound belonged to Nile Theological College; a Christian doctor had rented it, and he lost all his belongings, sources said.

The bulldozer, accompanied by NISS personnel and police, carried out the demolitions based on a court order demanding that church leaders surrender the premises to Muslim investors. The church committee of members that the Sudanese government interposed made a secret agreement with the investors to sell the church property as part of Sudan's campaign to do away with Christianity in the country, church leaders said.

Church members regard the committee that arranged the transfer of the property to business interests as a "government puppet committee" supporting the government agenda to do away with Christianity.

Last month authorities destroyed the home of pastor Hafiz Fasaha at the SPEC church compound after ordering personnel inside to leave the premises, church leaders said. Authorities told the Christians a Muslim businessman owned the land and that they had a court order calling for the use of force to take over the property.

While the church blames the government for the court order that it surrender the property, a representative of the Muslim businessmen laying claim to it has said a contract was signed about four years ago giving them the right to invest in the land for a

period of up to 20 years. The representative asserts that because of church opposition he had to go to the government to take the land by force.

Church leaders hold ownership papers to the property and believe any contract surrendering it comes from a government ruse.

Harassment, arrests and persecution of Christians have intensified since the secession of South Sudan in 2011, when President Omar al-Bashir vowed to adopt a stricter version of *sharia* (Islamic law) and recognize only Islamic culture and the Arabic language.

The Sudanese Minister of Guidance and Endowments announced in April 2013 that no new licenses would be granted for building new churches in Sudan, citing a decrease in the South Sudanese population.

On Oct. 5, 2013, Sudan's police and security forces broke through the church fence, beat and arrested Christians in the compound and asserted parts of the property belonged to a Muslim investor accompanying them. As Muslims nearby shouted, "*Allahu Akbar* [God is greater]," plainclothes police and personnel from NISS broke onto the property aboard a truck and two Land Cruisers. After beating several Christians who were in the compound, they arrested some of them; they were all released later that day.

Following the secession of South Sudan in July 2011, Sudan since 2012 has expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed church buildings on the pretext that they belonged to South Sudanese. Besides raiding Christian bookstores and arresting Christians, authorities threatened to kill South Sudanese Christians who do not leave or cooperate with them in their effort to find other Christians (see Morning Star News).

Due to its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations, Sudan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999, and in April 2013, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended the country remain on the list.

Sudan authorities demolish church and detain dozens

BosNewsLife (04.12.2014) <http://www.bosnewslife.com/34174-sudan-authorities-demolish-church-and-detain-dozens> - Sudanese authorities have detained dozens of devoted Christians and demolished part of the main church building of their evangelical congregation in the capital, as part of an escalating crackdown against non-Muslims, Christians confirmed Thursday, December 4.

Security forces reportedly raided the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church on Tuesday, December 2, arrested 37 people who were praying inside, and began to destroy the building.

The detained 15 women and 22 men were charged with "breach of the peace, public nuisance and obstruction of a public servant during the course of his duty", supporters told BosNewsLife.

Eleven of the detainees were transferred to Khartoum Bahri Criminal Court, which acquitted two of the group and found the rest guilty of the charges, imposing a fine of 250 Sudanese Pounds (\$43 USD), said Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) an advocacy group.

Eleven others were sent to Omar El Mukhtar court in Kober, Khartoum North. They were

reportedly found guilty of the charges and also fined 250 Sudanese Points. The final 15 were tried at the El Jireif West Criminal court and were all acquitted.

More Actions

The latest raid was the latest in series of actions taken against the Bahri Evangelical Church in recent weeks, Christians said.

On November 17, security personnel reportedly arrived at the church and demolished a wall of the main building and neighbouring houses. The church leaders were shown a court order demanding that the property be given to a Muslim businessman who was the alleged owner.

The next day church leaders filed a formal challenge over the legal ownership and were awaiting a court decision, according to Christians familiar with the case.

Yet, hours later security forces arrived citing another court order requiring all property to be removed from one of the adjacent homes and that padlocks belonging to the Muslim businessman should be fitted on all church doors.

Church members reportedly formed a human shield preventing police from interfering.

Leaders Detained

On November 28, some eight people were arrested for refusing to comply with the court orders to hand over the church to the Muslim businessman.

The group apparently included five church leaders named as Reverend Daud Fadul, elder Fathi Hakim, elder Nouh Manzoul, deacon Iman Hamid and Tilal Mafishi.

CSW cited local sources as saying police officers were still surrounding the church building, "indicating their intention to take further action."

The raid on Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church is the third incident of the government destroying church buildings during 2014, suggesting "an escalation of intimidation against Christians," CSW said.

"We are deeply concerned by the continuing action of the Sudanese authorities against the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church," CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas told BosNewsLife.

Rights Violations

He said the destruction of the church building and detention of dozens of praying Christians violated freedom of religion or believe, and freedom of expression, association and assembly "which are all guaranteed under Sudan's constitution."

Already in July Sudan's government reiterated its policy of not allowing new church buildings to be built, two weeks after another church was reportedly demolished with only 24 hours notice given to church leaders.

Christians and rights activists say the attacks on churches have extended to the Nuba Mountains where the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have been at war with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North since 2011.

In October this year the SAF dropped four bombs on the Episcopal Church of Sudan

(ECS) compound in Al Atmor, South Kordofan, destroying the church, a house and adjoining properties.

Thomas said his group had urged the international community, including the African Union "to hold Sudan to its international obligations."

Police in Sudan arrest church leaders for refusing to surrender worship property

Morning Star News (25.11.2014) - <http://morningstarnews.org/2014/11/police-in-sudan-arrest-church-leaders-for-refusing-to-surrender-worship-property/> - Police and security personnel today dispersed a congregation keeping vigil over its disputed property in North Khartoum, Sudan, and arrested five church leaders, sources said.

Authorities arrived at noon at the compound of the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church, where last week they demolished a pastor's house and church wall, and threatened to arrest members of the congregation camped out on the site of the destroyed house as the Christians prayed and worshipped, a church source told Morning Star News.

Five church leaders were arrested for refusing to surrender the property as they encouraged the church to remain vigilant - the Rev. Daud Fadul, elder Fathi Hakim, elder Nouh Manzoul, deacon Iman Hamid and Tilal Mafishi. The leaders of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC)-affiliated congregation were taken to Khartoum North Police Station, the source said.

"Police present can still be seen surrounding Bahri Evangelical Church," he said.

Another member added, "The whole church since last week has been camping in this place to prevent church property from destruction."

Church members and other Christians who have been gathering at the site urged President Omar al-Bashir to stop targeting church property.

A sign in front of the church read, "We urge president of the Republic to urgently intervene and stop targeting church property." Police removed it today as they entered the compound.

After a bulldozer accompanied by security personnel and police knocked down a wall of the church and houses on Nov. 17-18, the Christians formed a human barrier to face down further demolition attempts on Wednesday and Thursday (Nov. 19-20).

One of the homes destroyed in the compound belonged to Nile Theological College; a Christian doctor had rented it, and he lost all his belongings, sources said.

The bulldozer, accompanied by National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) personnel and police, carried out the demolitions based on a court order demanding that church leaders surrender the premises to Muslim businessman Khalid Mustafa. A church committee of members that the Sudanese government interposed made a secret agreement with Mustafa to sell him church property as part of Sudan's campaign to do away with Christianity in the country, church leaders said.

Church members regard the committee that arranged the transfer of the property to business interests as a "government puppet committee" supporting the government agenda to do away with Christianity.

After the Nov. 17 demolitions, church leaders filed a court complaint the next day and were told they would have to wait until Dec. 4 to have their grievances heard.

The next day authorities destroyed the home of pastor Hafiz Fasaha at the SPEC church compound after ordering personnel inside to leave the premises, church leaders said. Authorities told the Christians a Muslim businessman owned the land and that they had a court order calling for the use of force to take over the property.

On Wednesday (Nov. 19) at 2 p.m., police arrived at the church compound with another court order, this one requiring the removal of all property inside the main pastor's house and the removal of all padlocks to allow the businessman to install his own padlock. After a lengthy discussion between police and church leaders, boisterous young men from the church arrived ready to defend the building.

With church women wailing and screaming, police decided to leave, saying they would return later. Church leaders called on members to remain vigilant, and when authorities returned with a bulldozer at 2 a.m. on Thursday (Nov. 20), they encountered hundreds of church members who made a human shield that prevented the demolition.

While the church blames the government for the court order that it surrender the property, a representative of the Muslim businessman laying claim to it has said a contract was signed about four years ago giving him the right to invest in the land for a period of up to 20 years. The representative asserts that because of church opposition he had to go to the government to take the land by force.

Church leaders hold ownership papers to the property and believe any contract surrendering it comes from a government ruse. On Oct. 5, 2013, Sudan's police and security forces broke through the church fence, beat and arrested Christians in the compound and asserted parts of the property belonged to a Muslim investor accompanying them.

As Muslims nearby shouted, "*Allahu Akbar* [God is greater]," plainclothes police and personnel from NISS broke onto the property aboard a truck and two Land Cruisers. After beating several Christians who were in the compound, they arrested some of them, including Pastor Fadul; they were all released later that day.

Authorities asserted that another Muslim businessman, Hisham Hamada El-Neel, had signed a contract giving him a right to invest in land. Church members were not told who gave him the contract, and they suspected the government was behind the move.

Harassment, arrests and persecution of Christians have intensified since the secession of South Sudan, when Bashir vowed to adopt a stricter version of *sharia* (Islamic law) and recognize only Islamic culture and the Arabic language.

On June 30 authorities in North Khartoum demolished another church building, just a day after giving verbal notice during the congregation's worship service, sources said. Bulldozers demolished the Sudanese Church of Christ in the Thiba Al Hamyida area of the city as church members watched, with security personnel threatening to arrest them if they tried to block their efforts, church members said.

On Aug. 24 another Christian property, the Khartoum Christian Center housing the Sudan Pentecostal Church, was closed down. Church leadership said an Islamic Facebook page indicated the church should be closed because it was winning many Muslims to Christ.

On Feb. 17, bulldozers accompanied by local police and personnel from the NISS destroyed the Sudanese Church of Christ building in the Ombada area of Omdurman, across the River Nile from Khartoum, without any advance notice.

Officials gave no reason for the demolition except that, as it was located in a "Muslim area," the 300-member church was not wanted there, a church member said. Another source, a church leader, confirmed to Morning Star News that authorities destroyed the building and confiscated the land without warning. The orders came from the Ombada locality, or city council, sources said.

Following the secession of South Sudan in July 2011, Sudan since 2012 has expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed church buildings on the pretext that they belonged to South Sudanese. Besides raiding Christian bookstores and arresting Christians, authorities threatened to kill South Sudanese Christians who do not leave or cooperate with them in their effort to find other Christians (see Morning Star News).

Due to its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations, Sudan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999, and in April 2013, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended the country remain on the list.

Pope Francis meets Meriam Ibrahim, Sudanese Christian woman formerly sentenced to death

AP (24.07.2014) - Pope Francis has met privately with a Sudanese woman who arrived in Italy after escaping a death sentence in Sudan for refusing to recant her Christian faith.

The Vatican said Pope Francis had "a very affectionate" meeting with Meriam Ibrahim, 27, her husband and their two small children. Vatican spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi said the pope "thanked her for her faith and courage, and she thanked him for his prayer and solidarity" during the half-hour meeting Thursday.

Francis frequently calls attention to the plight of those persecuted for their religious beliefs.

Ibrahim arrived earlier in Rome, greeted by Italy's premier, en route to the United States, where her husband has citizenship. Italy along with the United States worked for her release.

Meriam Ibrahim arrives in Italy

CSW (24.07.2014) – Meriam Ibrahim and her family have arrived safely in Italy after criminal charges against her and her husband were dismissed and they were permitted to leave the Sudan.

On 24 June, Mrs Ibrahim and her husband Daniel Wani were detained as they attempted to leave Sudan, and were later charged with forgery and provision of false information under article 123 and 97 of the 1991 Criminal Code, due to alleged irregularities with her travel documents. Sources have informed Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) that these charges have now been dismissed, clearing the way for the family to leave the

country. They left at approximately 4am Sudanese time on an Italian government plane, accompanied by the Italian Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs. Meriam and her children travelled on passports issued by Sudanese authorities and CSW was informed the family will eventually travel to the US.

On 23 June, the Appeal Court overturned the decision of the Public Order Court in El Haj Yousif, Khartoum to sentence Mrs Ibrahim to death for apostasy and 100 lashes for adultery. The Appeal Court also recognised Mrs Ibrahim's marriage to Daniel Wani and ordered her immediate release. However, the following day Mrs Ibrahim and her husband were detained at Khartoum Airport by the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS).

Mrs Ibrahim was born in western Sudan to a Sudanese Muslim father and an Ethiopian Orthodox mother. Her father left the family when she was six years old and she was subsequently brought up as a Christian by her mother. The case against Mrs Ibrahim began after her alleged family members made Sudanese authorities aware of her marriage to Daniel Wani, a Christian with joint Sudanese and American citizenship. Morning Star news reported that Mrs Ibrahim testified before the court on 4 March that she is a life-long Christian, producing her marriage certificate, where she is classified as Christian, as evidence. Three potential witnesses from western Sudan who went to court to testify of Mrs Ibrahim's lifelong adherence to Christianity were prevented from giving evidence.

Mrs Ibrahim's alleged family attempted to challenge the Appeal Court's decision to release her; however, CSW was informed this too has been dismissed. Her lawyers continue to face threats from extremists for working on her case. In a comment to CSW one lawyer said "Now we are a target", adding that days earlier extremists had protested and reiterated they would kill Mrs Ibrahim and anyone who helped her. According to the lawyer, one of the people involved in this protest has been arrested.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are delighted by the decision to drop the unwarranted cases against Mrs Ibrahim and her husband, and to allow the family to leave the country, and we commend the Italian government for its effective interventions on behalf of this family. However, the legal anomaly that allowed the prosecution and harassment of Mrs Ibrahim and her family continues still exists. In order to prevent further cases like Mrs Ibrahim's, we urge the Sudanese authorities to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief for all of its citizens, as guaranteed in Sudan's Interim Constitution and in international statutes to which the nation is party. The Sudanese authorities must also ensure that human rights defenders are able to practice their profession without experiencing harassment.

Meriam's case highlights plight of Sudan's Christians

World Watch Monitor (16.07.2014) –

https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/07/article_3221521.html/ - The globally known apostasy case of the death-row mother Meriam Ibrahim, forced to give birth with her legs shackled, is only one of many examples of the religious discrimination that Sudanese Christians battle on a regular basis.

The poverty-stricken Muslim country lost the majority of its Christian population to South Sudan when the South became independent in 2011 - the creation of the world's newest nation. The South Sudanese population had fought for more than 40 years, in Africa's longest civil war, against domination by the Islamic north. But because war so crippled

and destroyed the South, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Christians fled into the north, where their lives passed often uneasily, and they found themselves settling, often by default. When peace eventually came in 2005, there was too much at stake for them to move country, and many could not afford to do so.

Not surprisingly, given the civil war fault-lines, those Christians now left in the north after the split are finding life in the Islamic nation less than easy. According to the World Watch List 2014 (an annual ranking compiled by Open Doors, which works with Christians under pressure worldwide), Sudan is the 11th most difficult country to be a Christian, out of a ranking of 50.

Destruction of church buildings

Sudanese Religious Affairs Minister Shalil Abdullah on July 12 re-iterated a freeze on new church permits, saying that Sudan has enough churches. In April 2013 his predecessor had announced (http://www.newsfromafrica.org/newsfromafrica/articles/art_13860.html) that licenses would not be granted to allow for the building of new ones.

Both Ministers cited the fact that the Christian population has substantially decreased since the secession of South Sudan.

The secretary-general of the Sudan Council of Churches Rev Kori El Ramli said he was surprised by this latest re-statement of the ban. "We are growing, we need more churches," he told the BBC's Focus on Africa radio programme.

In the most recent incident, on July 1, government officials destroyed the Sudanese Church of Christ in North Khartoum.

Within a 24-hour notice, 70 government officials turned up to demolish the church, which hosted a congregation of more than 600 people. They said the government wanted the land for low-cost housing. The church administration appealed for the demolition to be postponed until the end of the rainy season, but the officials refused.

El Ramli also told the BBC that town planners have been forcibly moving Christians to an area north of Omdurman – itself across the Nile from North Khartoum, where the church that was bulldozed had been located. The ruling means that the area where the congregation is being relocated will not have a church, he said.

"We want the government to give us new plots so we can build a new church. We are citizens and the constitution says there is freedom of religion and worship so we are using this to try to get our rights."

El Ramli said authorities are taking a threatening stance against Christians. He said Sudanese intelligence agents interrupted a workshop the Council of Churches held at the University of Sudan on July 14, accusing them of evangelising.

According to CNN, the threat of violence has caused Sudan's churches to empty. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/06/30/world/africa/sudan-church-violence/>). "The church is now contaminated with terror. You don't feel safe in prayer," one Christian activist, who asked CNN not to identify them by name, said.

Bishops speak of visa restrictions, now seen as South Sudanese 'foreigners'

"Christians in Sudan can attend divine service unmolested, but there is no genuine freedom of religion and conscience in the country," spoke out Catholic Bishop Edward

Kussala, head of the Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan, to Aid to the Church in Need on July 10.

Bishop Kussala said priests and bishops now live "as de facto illegals" in Sudan and are not allowed to hold passports.

"They cannot leave the country and would likely be barred from returning should they leave...the bishops are condemned to remain silent," he said.

The Catholic Archbishop of Khartoum, Cardinal Zubeir Wako has also highlighted the church's difficulties. While attending the South Sudan and Sudan Bishops' plenary in Juba at the start of the year, he regretted that his auxiliary bishop could not attend the meeting since his passport had been detained, along with those of eight priests.

"The churches are facing serious difficulties. We must focus on the serious matters and come up with strong messages," said Wako at the time.

The government is using the exodus of Christians from Sudan to South Sudan as an excuse to rid the Sudan church of its leadership, according to the Church officials. The leadership is largely made up South Sudanese.

The argument is given that the majority of South Sudanese have left, and others continue to leave Sudan, so the priests and religious who served the Christian community when the country was united are no longer needed.

Another senior bishop, who did not wish to be named for fear of his safety, has told World Watch Monitor the intelligence service has interrogated individual priests.

"Some have spent long periods undergoing interrogation," said the bishop. "The (government) is also making acquiring of visas for South Sudanese priests very difficult. I think this very unfair, because the clergy need them to run the churches as 'missionaries' since they are seen as 'foreigners'."

Of the nearly 40 priests of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Khartoum, only six are considered Sudanese and may not need the permits since they hail from the Nuba Mountains.

The majority of the priests, 34, are from South Sudan, and if they wish to go home on a visit they may not get re-entry permits, according to Church officials. Many had served the Church in the north before the country split into two in December 2011.

Most senior Protestant and Roman Catholic bishops, including Cardinal Wako, who are from South Sudan now face the challenge of being seen as "missionaries" on six months visa permits.

Since 2010, no new 'missionaries' for the Roman Catholic Church, for example, have been allowed into Sudan, despite needs created by retirement or death.

The uncertainty of the permits is crippling the church, note Church officials, who believe the government is eyeing lucrative church properties found in Khartoum and other regions.

World Watch Monitor has learnt that priests and pastors have also been detained, threatened and harassed. All Western missionaries have forced out of the country, according to Church officials.

Destruction of churches is not new

On February 17th the police had earlier destroyed another church in the capital Khartoum. That 300-member church also belonged to the Sudan Church of Christ. Bulldozers accompanied by police officers from the National Intelligence and Security Service had destroyed the church in Ombada in the Ondurman area of the city without prior notice. The authorities said they were destroying the church because it stood in a Muslim area.

"We had not any prior indication from the officials the church would be destroyed," said a Christian at the time, who also sought anonymity.

In April 2012, while a brief territorial war between Sudan and South Sudan was going on, a mob of Islamist extremists attacked and destroyed a church west of Khartoum, despite a police cordon.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an advisory body to the U.S. Congress, said in its 2014 report (<http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Sudan%202014.pdf>) that Sudan's government "continues to engage in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief."

The report noted that the government also imposes a restrictive interpretation "of Shari'ah law on Muslims and non-Muslims alike, using amputations and floggings for crimes and acts of "indecent" and "immorality" and arresting Christians for proselytizing... Religious freedom violations, as well as the violence in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur, are the result of President Bashir's policies of Islamization and Arabization.

Sudan bans construction of new churches

By Mohammed Amin

Daily Nation (13.07.2014) / <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Sudan-bans-construction-of-new-churches/-/1066/2382126/-/rr8fh4/-/index.html> - Sudan has prohibited the construction of any new church in the country which has been under an Islamic regime since 1989.

The Sudanese Minister of Guidance and Religious Endowments Shalil Abdullah announced that the government will henceforth not issue permits for the building of churches in the country.

Minister Shalil Abdullah told the press on Saturday that the existing churches are enough for the Christians population remaining in Sudan after the secession of South Sudan in 2011.

He pointed out that South Sudan is now an independent country with a majority of its people being Christians, and that the number of Christians still in Sudan is small.

The ban elicited immediate criticism from Sudanese Christian leaders. Secretary-General of Sudan Council of Churches Reverend Kori El Ramli told radio Tamazuj that the statement made by the minister contradicts the country's constitution.

Christian minority

"Yes, we are a minority, but we have freedom of worship and belief just like the rest of the Sudanese as long as we are Sudanese nationals like them," he explained.

The bishop also criticized the recent demolition of a church near a suburb located in Khartoum North by local authorities.

On July 1, authorities demolished the Sudanese Christ Church at El Izba residential area in Khartoum North.

Kuwa Shamal Kuku, the bishop of the demolished church, expressed his discontent saying the demolition was carried out under the pretext of protecting the land.

Sudan sentenced to death a Christian woman last May after she refused to renounce her faith.

She was freed by the Sudanese appeal court, but she is still staying in the American embassy in Khartoum after being prevented from leaving the country last month.

The verdict of the Sudanese court sparked international criticism on religious freedom in the country.

Sudan to reject new church construction permits

Radio Tamazuj (12.07.2014) /

<https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/sudan-reject-new-church-construction-permits> - The Sudanese Minister of Guidance and Religious Endowments has announced that the government will never give new permits for the building of new churches in the country. Sudanese Christian leaders reacted by criticizing the statement.

Minister Shalil Abdullah told the Khartoum-based El Jerida newspaper recently that the existing churches are enough for the Christians remaining in Sudan after the secession of South Sudan in 2011.

He pointed out that South Sudan became an independent country where the majority of its people are Christians, while the number of Christians in Sudan is small.

Reacting to the news, Rev. Kori El Ramli, the Secretary-General of Sudan Council of Churches told Radio Tamazuj on Thursday the statement made by the minister contradicts the country's constitution.

"Yes, we are a minority, but we have freedom of worship and belief just like the rest of the Sudanese as long as we are Sudanese nationals like them," he explained.

The pastor also criticized the demolition of a church a suburb of Khartoum North by local authorities recently.

On 1 July, Sudanese authorities bulldozed the Sudanese Christ Church at El Izba residential area (Tayibat El Ahamda) block 19 in Khartoum North.

For his part, Kuwa Shamal Kuku, the bishop of the demolished church, expressed his

discontent about the move, saying the church was destroyed completely by the government under the pretext of protecting the land.

The priest told Radio Tamazuj yesterday that the bulldozed church was built in 1983.

“Sudan’s Christians are second-class citizens”

Mgr. Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala, bishop of a South Sudanese diocese, says Khartoum does nothing to protect religious freedom

Vatican Insider (07.011.2014) /

<http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/world-news/detail/articolo/sudan-sudan-sudan-35201/> - “The legal situation of Christians in Sudan is worrying,” says the bishop of the South Sudanese diocese of Tambura-Yambio, Mgr. Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala, who is currently visiting the main offices of Aid to the Church in Need.

Although the Constitution guarantees equal rights to all Sudanese citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs, Christians are considered and treated as second-rate citizens. Bishops and priests are not granted passports and they do not have legal status. They are able to leave the country but re-entry may be refused. Priests have already been expelled; and the bishops are condemned to remain silent,” the prelate said.

Christians are allowed to attend liturgical celebrations but Khartoum does nothing to protect religious freedom, Mgr. Hiiboro mentions the recent case of Meriam Yahia Ibrahimy as an example. Meriam was sentenced to death for allegedly committing apostasy. “Among those around her she had long been known as a Christian. For whatever motives, she was blackmailed and then charged. The government expressed no view on the matter and simply left it all to the Islamic clerics,” the monsignor said. The bishop points out that Meriam did not convert. Her father was a Muslim but left home when she was just five years old, so Meriam grew up in the Christian Orthodox faith followed by her mother. Then, when she met her husband, Daniel Wani, in 2011, she became a member of the Catholic Church. “Only in response to international pressure was Meriam Ibrahimy eventually released in June; this mother of two had previously been compelled to give birth to her youngest child in prison.”

Although discrimination against Christians is not a new phenomenon in Sudan following the majority Christian South’s secession in July 2011, the situation has got considerably worse. The Sudanese Church openly supported the creation of South Sudan, calling often on “those with political responsibility” to respect the will of the country’s citizens. However, “it is now being made responsible for the South’s break-away. But the Church does not pursue any political aims. We only call upon politicians to respect freedom of religious faith and conscience.”

Meriam Ibrahim: Sudan 'apostasy' woman freed again

BBC (27.06.2014) / <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28050753> - A Sudanese woman whose death sentence for renouncing Islam was overturned has been released from jail again, after she was detained at Khartoum airport on Tuesday.

Meriam Ibrahim's lawyer, Muhannad Mustafa, said that she was currently in the US embassy with her family.

Mrs Ibrahim had been detained on charges of falsifying ID documents.

She was first released on 23 June when an appeals court lifted her death sentence for renouncing Islam.

Her sentencing in May to hang for apostasy sparked an outcry at home and around the world.

Mrs Ibrahim, 27, had been held at a police station in the capital, since Tuesday, when she was prevented from leaving the country along with her husband, Daniel Wani, and their two children.

Daniel Wani is a Christian from South Sudan and is a US citizen.

She had reportedly planned to travel to the US with her family.

According to Reuters news agency, quoting her lawyer, Mrs Ibrahim was released on the condition that she remains in Sudan.

"Mariam was released after a guarantor was found, but, of course, she would not be able to leave the country," Mr Mustafa said.

"I would like to thank the Sudanese people and the Sudanese police," she told the BBC in an exclusive interview as she left custody. "I would like to thank those who stood beside me."

Asked about her plans following her release, she said: "I will leave it to God. I didn't even have a chance to see my family after I got out of prison."

Document dispute

She has been charged with forgery relating to the South Sudanese travel document she was carrying, and accused of providing false information.

South Sudan's embassy in Khartoum says the emergency travel documents were issued by the South Sudan authorities and are genuine.

However, Sudanese officials say she should have used a Sudanese passport and on Wednesday Sudan's foreign ministry summoned the US and South Sudan charges d'affaires over the issue.

The ministry criticised South Sudan for issuing travel documents "despite their knowledge that she is a Sudanese national" and condemned the US for trying to help the woman leave Sudan using an "illegal [false] travel document", the Suna news agency reports.

Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Authority is reported to have lodged the complaint against Mrs Ibrahim.

BBC correspondents say that now Sudan's intelligence agency is involved, Mrs Ibrahim's case is likely to be more difficult and complicated to resolve.

Sudan has a majority Muslim population, and Islamic law has been in force there since the 1980s.

Born to a Muslim father, Mrs Ibrahim married Mr Wani in 2011.

Even though Mrs Ibrahim was brought up as an Orthodox Christian, the authorities considered her to be a Muslim because of her father's religion.

At her trial in May in the capital, Khartoum, a judge also sentenced Mrs Ibrahim to 100 lashes for adultery because her marriage to a Christian man was not valid under Islamic law.

Sudan death row woman 'faked papers'

The Sudanese woman freed from death row has been accused of trying to leave the country with fake documents, her lawyer has told the BBC.

BBC (25.06.2014) / <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28014714> - Meriam Ibrahim was detained on Tuesday, a day after a court released her, annulling the death sentence imposed on her for renouncing the Islamic faith.

Mrs Ibrahim had emergency travel documents issued by South Sudan when she was detained at Khartoum's airport.

Mrs Ibrahim had reportedly planned to travel to the US with her family.

She was sentenced in May to hang for renouncing Islam, sparking an outcry at home and around the world.

She gave birth to a girl while on death row.

Sudan's appeal court overturned the conviction on Monday.

The US says it is working with Sudan to ensure Mrs Ibrahim, 27, is freed.

She was detained along with her husband, Daniel Wani, a US citizen, and their two children.

Mrs Ibrahim's lawyer, Elsherif Ali, told the BBC that Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Authority had lodged the complaint against Mrs Ibrahim, accusing her of obtaining a fake travel document.

Mrs Ibrahim is being held at a police station in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, he said.

South Sudan's embassy in Khartoum says the travel documents are genuine - her husband is a Christian originally from South Sudan.

Mrs Ibrahim's husband and children are believed to be staying at the embassy after being released, reports the BBC's Mohamed Osman from Khartoum.

"We are worried; that's why we want to get out of here as soon as possible," Mr Wani told AFP news agency.

But with Sudan's intelligence agency now involved, Mrs Ibrahim's case is likely to be more difficult and complicated to resolve, our correspondent says.

Earlier, Sudanese foreign ministry official, Abdullahi Alzareg, said that Mrs Ibrahim was Sudanese and should not have been using another country's travel document, stamped with a US visa.

"She came to the airport in an American embassy car - which was bullet proof and heavily guarded," Mr Alzareg told the BBC's Newshour programme, describing this as "fishy".

"Everyone knows she is Sudanese. We know she is Sudanese... imagine a British citizen trying to travel wherever, appearing at the airport carrying an emergency document from Costa Rica. This is a violation of immigration law anywhere in the world," he said.

Mrs Ibrahim would be asked to apply for a passport and exit visa on her release, Mr Alzareg said.

Sudan has a majority Muslim population, and Islamic law has been in force there since the 1980s.

Born to a Muslim father, Mrs Ibrahim married Mr Wani in 2011.

Even though Mrs Ibrahim was brought up as an Orthodox Christian, the authorities considered her to be a Muslim because that is the religion of her father.

Sudan death row woman Meriam Ibrahim freed again

BBC News (24.06.2014) - A Sudanese woman freed from death row on Monday has been released again after being briefly detained with her family at Khartoum airport.

Meriam Ibrahim was sentenced in May to hang for renouncing Islam, sparking widespread outrage at home and abroad.

About 40 security agents detained Mrs Ibrahim - along with her husband, Daniel Wani and two children - at the airport, the sources said.

But Sudan has told the US that she and her family have now been released.

"They were temporarily detained for several hours over questions related to their documents," Marie Harf, a spokeswoman for the US state department, told journalists.

Sudan's government had assured the US that Mrs Ibrahim and her family were safe, Ms Harf added.

She said the US is working with Sudan to ensure their safe passage out of the country.

Earlier, a top Sudanese official told the BBC that although Mrs Ibrahim is Sudanese, she was using emergency South Sudanese papers with a US visa.

She would be asked to get a passport and exit visa on her release, Abdullahi Alzareg from the ministry of foreign affairs said.

Mrs Ibrahim's husband is a Christian from what is now South Sudan and has US nationality.

One of Mrs Ibrahim's lawyers, el-Shareef Ali, told the BBC that her legal team had been denied access to her.

She was released from prison on Monday after an appeal court annulled the death sentence imposed on her.

She was initially arrested in February, and gave birth to a daughter in prison not long after being sentenced.

Before she was detained on Tuesday, Western countries had welcomed the decision to rescind the death penalty.

Born to a Muslim father, Mrs Ibrahim, 27, married Mr Wani in 2011.

Sudan has a majority Muslim population, and Islamic law has been in force there since the 1980s.

Even though Mrs Ibrahim was brought up as an Orthodox Christian, the authorities considered her to be a Muslim because that is the religion of her father.

Analysis: James Copnall, former BBC Sudan correspondent

The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) is an extremely powerful body, which frequently intervenes in Sudanese politics.

It is a key part of the informal coalition - also comprising the military, Islamists and pragmatists - which rules Sudan.

The different components are constantly jockeying for a better position.

In recent times, NISS has been flexing its muscles.

It is very possible that NISS did not like the decision to release Meriam Ibrahim, and re-arresting her and her family was a way of making this point to the rest of the Sudanese government.

However, security is not a homogenous entity either.

It is also conceivable that one part of NISS accepted Mrs Ibrahim's release, while another section was not happy with it.

Mrs Ibrahim's release and re-arrest simply underline the fact that there are many decision-makers in Sudanese politics, and they do not always agree with each other.

Sudan death row woman Meriam Ibrahim 'detained'

A Sudanese woman freed from death row on Monday has been detained with her family at Khartoum airport, sources have told the BBC.

BBC News (24.06.2014) / <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27998881> - Meriam Ibrahim was sentenced to hang in May for renouncing Islam, sparking widespread outrage at home and abroad.

About 40 security agents detained Mrs Ibrahim - along with her husband, Daniel Wani and two children - at the airport, the sources said.

On Monday, Mr Wani said the family intended to leave for the US.

Mrs Ibrahim was released from prison after an appeal court annulled the death sentence imposed on her.

She was arrested in February, and gave birth to a daughter in prison not long after being sentenced.

The family has been taken to the headquarters of one of Sudan's security agencies, the sources said.

Before she was detained on Tuesday, Western countries had welcomed the decision to rescind the death penalty.

Analysis: James Copnall, former BBC Sudan correspondent

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Born to a Muslim father, Mrs Ibrahim, 27, married Mr Wani, a Christian, in 2011.

Sudan has a majority Muslim population, and Islamic law has been in force there since the 1980s.

Even though Mrs Ibrahim was brought up as an Orthodox Christian, the authorities considered her to be a Muslim because that is the religion of her father.

Mr Wani has US citizenship.

Sudanese Christian mother sentenced to death for apostasy is freed

World Watch Monitor (23.06.2014) - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/> - Meriam Yahia Ibrahim's death sentence for apostasy has been struck down by the court of appeal in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan.

"The release of Ibrahim was declared during a plea that was brought to the court of appeal by the Commission for the Defence of Women," according to the national Sudan News Agency.

Ibrahim and her two children, a two-year-old son and a baby girl born this month, are believed to have been released from the prison in North Khartoum this afternoon. They had been detained in the jail since February.

One of Ibrahim's lawyers, Mohamed Mostafa, told Agence France Presse that the "reasons for her release have not been made public."

"We are very, very happy about this - and we're going to her now," another of her lawyers, Elshareef Ali, told the BBC.

Ibrahim, a 27-year-old Sudanese doctor who gave birth to her daughter while in shackles, had been condemned to death by hanging during a sentencing that was conducted May 15. The boy also was forced to stay in prison with his mother, as his father was refused custody because he is not Muslim.

"Today's ruling is a small step to redressing the injustice done to Meriam. However, she should never have been prosecuted. Meriam was sentenced to death when eight months pregnant for something which should not be a crime," said Sarah Jackson, Deputy Africa Director at Amnesty International.

The Executive Director of Hardwired Global, a social justice movement seeking to end religious oppression, Tina Ramirez said, "We are witnessing a historic moment - in the three decades of President Bashir's brutal dictatorship millions have lost their lives, yet here stands one defenseless and innocent young pregnant woman who forced President Bashir to respect her dignity and religious freedom."

The American Center for Law and Justice, a Washington D.C. based group that uses litigation to press for religious and speech freedom, called the ruling a significant victory for religious freedom.

"This is tremendous news," said Jordan Sekulow, Executive Director of the ACLJ. "Her release is a powerful testimony to the millions of people around the world who have called for her release. This is truly a significant victory for religious freedom."

The ACLJ took part in a global campaign by sending out a legal letter to the Sudanese government on behalf of 350,000 people outlining its violations of law and demanding freedom for Ibrahim and her American children.

Reasons for Ibrahim's imprisonment

Ibrahim was accused of apostasy for refusing to renounce her Christian faith. The authorities had previously said that Ibrahim's release would only be possible if she

renounced her faith and divorced her husband, although Sudan's 2005 interim constitution guarantees freedom of religion.

She was charged as a Muslim because her father was Muslim. However, Ibrahim claimed to be raised as a Christian because her mother is Orthodox Christian and her father left the family while she was young.

Previous court rulings had ordered her to receive 100 lashes for committing adultery as they did not recognise her marriage to Daniel Wani, a Catholic American. Under Sudan's Sharia law, Muslim women are not allowed to marry Christian men.

A June 11 statement released by the Catholic Church of Khartoum suggested that members of Ibrahim and Wani's families may have been motivated by a desire to access the couple's businesses, which includes a barber shop and agricultural products. It also said a lawyer who first dealt with the couple's case in September 2013 was forced to stop representing them due to pressure from Ibrahim's accusers, including her brother.

Some in Ibrahim's current legal team have received threats from extremists who say their actions are "un-Islamic" and that they, too, should receive death sentences.

Agence France Presse also reported that extremist groups had lobbied the Sudanese government to uphold the sentence.

Statement on Meriam Yahya Ibrahim, a Sudanese believer sentenced to death for apostasy

European Commission (10.06.2014) / http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-14-186_en.htm - The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy and the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz together with all religious leaders participating at this year's high-level meeting express their deepest dismay and concern with the fate of Mrs Meriam Yahya Ibrahim, who has been sentenced to a hundred lashes and sentenced to death by hanging on charges of apostasy and adultery. She recently gave birth to a baby girl while in prison. The above mentioned Presidents of EU institutions as well as all religious leaders present at the high-level meeting which include Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, underline Sudan's international obligation to protect the freedom of religion and belief and unanimously call upon the responsible Sudanese authorities and appeal courts to revoke this inhumane verdict and release Mrs Meriam with the utmost urgency.

The participants in today's meeting welcome the fact that the Court of Appeal has accepted the appeal and demand that the Sudanese government – in line with universal human rights - to repeal any legal provisions that penalise or discriminate against individuals for their religious beliefs or for changing their religion or beliefs or for inducing others to change a religion or belief, especially when cases of apostasy, heterodoxy, or conversion are punishable by death.

This is in line with Sudan being privy to the UN charter on Human Rights.

Freedom of Religion and belief is a universal human right that is valued highly by the European Union and needs to be protected everywhere and for everyone. To underline the Union's strong commitment to the protection of freedom of religion and belief, the European Union in June 2013 adopted Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief.

Background

In late 2013 Meriam Yahya Ibrahim, daughter of an Ethiopian Christian mother and Sudanese Muslim father was accused of adultery by her father's side of the family. The apostasy accusation was added in December 2013. As the father left the family when Meriam Ibrahim was six years old, she was raised as a Christian. She married a Sudanese-American. The verdict at the court of first instance was delivered on 12 May 2014, giving Meriam Ibrahim three days to renounce Christianity. On 15 May 2014, the verdict was reconfirmed as Meriam Ibrahim chose not to convert to Islam. On 27 May 2014 she gave birth to a baby girl at the prison clinic. She is imprisoned along with her 20-month-old son. On 5 May her file was successfully transferred to the Appeal Court.

Sudan has ratified the relevant UN and African Union conventions and thereby has an international obligation to defend and promote freedom of religion or belief, which notably includes the right to adopt, exchange or abandon one's religion or belief of one's own free will.

The Delegation of the European Union to Sudan in Khartoum is closely following the case. It has hosted a series of meetings with the lawyer and the EU Human Rights Counsellors, recalling the EU Guidelines on freedom of religion and belief of 2013. Freedom of religion was also raised in the EU's recent local statement on the national dialogue on 28 May 2014. The issue was raised at various government levels, including with a presidential advisor. In several EU Member States the respective Sudanese Ambassadors have been summoned regarding the case.

Links

Press release and list of participants at the High-level religious leaders meeting 2014

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-650_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-407_en.htm

EU Guidelines on freedom of religion and belief

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137585.pdf

Statement by HR/VP spokesperson on 15 May

http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140515_01_en.pdf

Delegation of the European Union to Sudan:

http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sudan/index_en.htm

Contacts :

[Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen](#) (+32 2 295 30 70)

[Jens Mester](#) (+32 2 296 39 73)

[Dirk Volckaerts](#) (+32 2 299 39 44)

For the public: **Europe Direct** by phone **00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11** or by [e-mail](#)

Quai d'Orsay mobilised on behalf of Maryam Yahya in Sudan

Zenit (19.05.2014) / <http://www.zenit.org/fr/articles/france-mobilisation-du-quai-d-orsay-pour-maryam-yahya> - In the name of freedom of conscience, religious freedom and the rejection of the death penalty, Quai d'Orsay (a common appellation for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is rallying in favour of the young female doctor sentenced to be hung in Sudan for having declared herself a Christian.

"France condemns the decision of the Sudanese justice system to impose the death penalty on a young woman for apostasy. Our embassy in Khartoum has followed these proceedings and attended the sentencing. We will continue to follow with the greatest attention the upcoming judicial developments," declared a spokesperson for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the 19th of May.

He insists on the freedom of conscience: "This decision strikes the conscience and rightfully provokes outrage in the international community." France, continues the Communiqué, calls on authorities to guarantee the freedom of religion or belief, a fundamental principle enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has been ratified by Sudan. Regarding the death penalty, Quai d'Orsay also recalled "its firm and unwavering opposition to the death penalty in all places and in all circumstances."

"I am a Christian," declared Maryam Yahya Ibrahim, the 27-year-old Sudanese physician, who is eight months pregnant, before an Islamic court in Khartoum. Her statement was reported by international television and news agencies. She was sentenced to death on Thursday 15th May for apostasy. She had earlier received 100 lashes for adultery.

Her case is raising an outcry in Italy. Her father was a Muslim, but he abandoned her when she was a child. Raised by her Orthodox mother from Ethiopia, she later married a Christian man from South Sudan. For this she has been accused of denying Islam, which is punishable by death by hanging. To a Muslim representative, who entered the prison to try and convince her to "return to Islam," she said: "I have never been a Muslim; therefore, I have not committed apostasy." And as she is considered a Muslim, her marriage to a Christian is not recognised by the law, thus the accusation of adultery.

It was a neighbour who denounced her July 2011 marriage to a Christian from South Sudan. She was arrested in August 2013 for "adultery" under Title 146 of the Penal Code of Sudan. During the trial last February, she declared herself a Christian: the accusation of apostasy would have fallen under Article 146. She received a stay of execution to give her time to birth the child that she is carrying and to breastfeed, two years under Islamic law. She has another child of 20 months.

Many Sudanese have taken to the streets with banners calling for the respect of religious freedom: "No to putting religions on trial" "No coercion in religious matters" "Respect religious freedom"

Western embassies have signed a joint statement calling for respect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and for the woman's immediate release. National and international human rights associations have mobilised as well as students of universities, which have been closed. Journalists covering the trial have been arrested.

Up against the pressure of international public opinion, the sentence could be commuted to life imprisonment, a decision which is still no more respectful of either the freedom of religion or of conscience.

Translation French - English by HRWF

Sudan: Court confirms death sentence for pregnant woman

CSW (15.05.2014) - Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has learned that the Public Order Court in El Haj Yousif Khartoum, Sudan, has confirmed Meriam Yahia Ibrahim's death sentence for apostasy after she refused to renounce her faith. The court had given the heavily pregnant Christian mother until 15 May to convert to Islam, implying that her sentence could be annulled or reduced if she did so.

Mrs Ibrahim was arrested on 17 February 2014, and subsequently charged and sentenced to 100 lashes for adultery and death for 'apostasy' (leaving Islam) under articles 146 and 126 of Sudan's Penal Code respectively, after Sudanese authorities were made aware of her marriage to a Christian man. She is currently detained in Omdurman Federal Women's Prison along with her 20-month-old son, Daniel Wani.

Mrs Ibrahim testified before the court on 4 March that she is a life-long Christian, producing her marriage certificate where she is classified as Christian as proof of her religion. She was born in western Sudan to a Sudanese Muslim father and an Ethiopian Orthodox mother. Her father left the family when Mrs Ibrahim was six years old and she was subsequently brought up as a Christian by her mother. Three potential witnesses from western Sudan who went to the hearing to testify of Mrs Ibrahim's lifelong adherence to Christianity were prevented from giving evidence.

After the court confirmed the death sentence, Mrs Ibrahim's lawyers asserted their intention to launch an appeal, a process which could take several months.

Concerns about Mrs Ibrahim's health and welfare continue to be raised. Mrs Ibrahim's husband has complained that throughout her incarceration his wife has been prevented from receiving visitors and, more seriously, from accessing vital medical treatment. A family member said: 'we are concerned for her wellbeing; it is not very safe for her to be in the prison with dangerous criminals'.

Mrs Ibrahim's sentence is the latest and most significant in a series of repressive acts by the Sudanese government against religious minorities. If the sentence is carried out Mrs Ibrahim will become the first person to be executed for apostasy under the 1991 penal code, prompting concerns that the charge may increasingly be used against anyone who converts from Islam.

CSW's Chief Operating Officer Andy Dipper said, "CSW continues to call for the annulment the inhumane and unwarranted sentence and for the immediate of Mrs Ibrahim and her son, who is being held in violation of article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a Sudanese citizen Mrs Ibrahim is entitled to freedom of religion of belief, constitution; consequently, this sentence amounts to a violation of the Sudanese Constitution and of international conventions to which Sudan is party, including the African Charter on Human and People's Rights."

Sudanese pregnant mother sentenced to death for 'apostasy'

World Watch Monitor (14.05.2014) /

https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/05/article_3138961.html/ -

Western Embassies have expressed deep concern for a Sudanese woman who has been sentenced to death in Khartoum for 'apostasy' [converting to Christianity] as well as to 100 lashes for committing adultery.

Meriam Yahia Ibrahim, who is 27-years-old and 8-months pregnant with her second child, received her death sentence on May 11. Despite her claimed faith in Jesus Christ, Sudanese authorities are claiming that she is a Muslim by virtue of the fact that she was born in Sudan.

[Amnesty International reports](#) that she has been given until her next hearing on Thursday May 15 to renounce her Christian faith, otherwise she is likely to be sentenced to flogging and death.

According to Justice Center Sudan, she was initially arrested and released on bail under suspicion of committing adultery in September 2013. Her brother lodged the criminal complaint against her, claiming that she was Muslim and therefore illegally cohabiting with a Christian man. It was later established that Ibrahim and her partner were married, in a church in 2012, and that they even had a 20-month-old son together.

On May 11 the Criminal Court in Al-Haj Yousef (an area where many Christians live in Khartoum) convicted Ibrahim of adultery, after declaring her church marriage invalid on account of her Muslim faith and upbringing. The evidence used in court was based on a number of her family members' accounts. The penalty for adultery under Article 146 of the Sudanese Penal Code is 100 lashes for offenders who are not married.

Ibrahim was raised as an Orthodox Christian in a small town located in Western Sudan. A graduate of Khartoum University, she was a practising medical doctor when she married her husband, a South Sudanese Christian with US citizenship, Daniel Wani. Despite the Sudanese government's refusal to recognise the couple's marriage for Ibrahim; the adultery case which was opened against her husband was dropped on account of his undisputed Christian faith. The court also confirmed that he had married Ibrahim in a church.

Their first born child has been in prison with his mother since her arrest because the authorities regard him as a Muslim and will not allow him to be raised by his [father who is a Christian](#). Ibrahim's unborn child is expected next month. If her death sentence is upheld her children's custody would be granted to the government, as the husband is not granted any rights over his children due to being a Christian.

Justice Center Sudan, a local human rights organization that is appealing Ibrahim's case on her behalf, said Ibrahim has been under pressure to convert from Christianity to Islam with the promise to reduce or eliminate the charges, but there are no confirmed reports regarding her response.

This case is unique to Sudan, as there are no other documented sentences from Sudanese courts that are based on people of different faiths coming together in marriage.

[The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies](#) says this case demonstrates "the internal contradictions of Sudanese law and its incompatibility with Sudan's diverse population and international commitments".

Sudan is ranked as the 11th most difficult country to be Christian of 50 countries to be ranked on the [2014 World Watch List](#).

The World Watch List is published annually by Open Doors International, a charity that supports Christians who live under pressure because of their faith.

Sudanese woman may face death for choosing Christianity over Islam

Reuters (13.05.2014) - A Sudanese court gave a 27-year-old woman until Thursday to abandon her newly adopted Christian faith and return to Islam or face a death sentence, judicial sources said on Monday.

Mariam Yahya Ibrahim was charged with apostasy as well as adultery for marrying a Christian man, something prohibited for Muslim women to do and which makes the marriage void.

The final ruling will be announced on Thursday. Ibrahim's case was the first of its kind to be heard in Sudan.

Young Sudanese university students have mounted a series of protests near Khartoum University in recent weeks asking for an end to human rights abuses, more freedoms and better social and economic conditions. The authorities decided on Sunday to close the university indefinitely.

Western embassies and Sudanese activists sharply condemned the accusations and called on the Sudanese Islamist-led government to respect freedom of faith.

"The details of this case expose the regime's blatant interference in the personal life of Sudanese citizens," Sudan Change Now Movement, a youth group, said in a statement.

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's government is facing a huge economic and political challenge after the 2011 secession of South Sudan, which was Sudan's main source of oil.

A decision by Bashir last year to cut subsidies and impose austerity measures prompted violent protests in which dozens were killed and hundreds were injured.

Sudan: Pregnant Sudanese woman sentenced to death for apostasy

CSW (13.05.2014) - Meriam Yahia Ibrahim, a Christian mother in late term pregnancy, was sentenced to death for apostasy and 100 lashes for adultery by the Public Order Court in El Haj Yousif Khartoum, Sudan on 11 May. The court informed Mrs Ibrahim she

had until 15 May to convert to Islam, implying that her sentence could be annulled or reduced if she did so.

Mrs Ibrahim was arrested on 17 February 2014, after Sudanese authorities were made aware of her marriage to a Christian man, and is currently detained in Omdurman Federal Women's Prison along with her 20-month-old son, Daniel Wani. Mrs Ibrahim was charged with adultery under article 146 and 'apostasy' (leaving Islam) under article 126 of the Penal Code.

Mrs Ibrahim was born in Western Sudan to a Sudanese Muslim father and an Ethiopian Orthodox mother. Her father left the family when she was six years old and she was subsequently brought up as a Christian by her mother. Under Shari'a law in Sudan, Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslim men. Moreover, since Mrs Ibrahim's father was a Muslim, she is considered to be a Muslim, rendering her marriage to Mr Wani invalid.

Mrs Ibrahim testified before the court on 4 March that she is a Christian, showing her marriage certificate, where she is classified as Christian, as proof of her religion. Three potential witnesses from western Sudan who went to the hearing to testify of Mrs Ibrahim's lifelong adherence to Christianity were prevented from giving evidence. Mr Wani reports that since their incarceration a guard named Kawther Hassen has not allowed his wife and son to receive visits, including from him, or to access medical assistance. Mr Wani also reports that his wife has been visited by Muslim scholars who have been pressuring her to 'return' to the religion of her father.

Mrs Ibrahim's sentence is the latest and most significant in a series of repressive acts by the Sudanese government against religious minorities. If the sentence is carried out Mrs Ibrahim will become the first person to be executed for apostasy under the 1991 penal code, prompting concerns that the charge may increasingly be used against anyone who converts from Islam.

The sentence comes months after the chairman of the Islamic Centre for Preaching and Comparative Studies, Ammar Saleh, accused the government of negligence in addressing apostasy and urged it to "stand against Christianisation and come up with a long term solution to the problem." Although President al Bashir has repeatedly stated that Sudan's new constitution would be "100% Islamic" and wholly based on Shari'a law, the new constitution has yet to be finalised, leaving the interim constitution in place, which references Shari'a as a source of law and not as the basis of the constitution. Since the charges against Mrs Ibrahim are based on Shari'a law, the interim constitution still provides for her right to freedom of religion or belief.

Since December 2012, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has noted an increase in detentions, interrogation and deportations of Christians, as well as the confiscation and destruction of churches and church property. There have also been targeted attacks on non-Muslim communities in South Kordofan since 2011. On 1 and 2 May, in an act condemned by the European Union as a war crime, the Sudanese Army Forces (SAF) bombed the Mother of Mercy Hospital, which is run by the Catholic Church and is the only functioning hospital providing humanitarian assistance to civilians in the Nuba Mountains. The Nuba are known to be one of the most tribally, religiously and linguistically diverse people of Sudan.

CSW's Chief Operating Officer Andy Dipper said, "The sentence handed down to Mrs Ibrahim is inhumane, unwarranted and unacceptable. CSW calls for its annulment and for the immediate release from prison of Mrs Ibrahim and her son, who is being held in violation of article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a statute that is binding on all member states of the United Nations. As a Sudanese citizen Mrs Ibrahim is entitled to freedom of religion of belief under the interim constitution and under international conventions to which Sudan is party. Furthermore, we urge the Sudanese

Government to address the high degree of societal hostility towards Sudan's religious minorities, including derogatory statements that may incite hatred, such as the statement by the Chairman of the Islamic Centre for Preaching and Comparative Studies. Finally we call on the Government of Sudan to end its campaign of indiscriminate aerial bombardments of civilian structures in the Nuba Mountains."