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South Sudanese reverends stopped at Khartoum airport

CSW (06.08.2015) - Reverends Yat Michael and Peter Reith have been prevented from leaving Sudan. They were stopped at Khartoum Airport on 6 August and informed that a travel ban issued against them on 23 March was still in force.

The South Sudanese clergymen had been [released from prison](#) following a court hearing on 5 August, during which Rev Michael was convicted of participation in a criminal organisation and Rev Reith of breaching public peace. Both were released on time served.

The legal team representing the clergymen immediately launched an appeal for the travel ban to be revoked, but was informed that the appeal would be heard on 9 August.

It is unclear whether it was the Prosecutor's Office or Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) that issued the ban. If it was issued by the Prosecutor's Office, it can be overturned by the courts. However, if it was issued by NISS, the appeal will be subject to NISS protocols and may be longer and more complex.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Yesterday Reverends Yat Michael and Peter Reith were released by the court. Now they are being prevented from leaving Sudan after many months were unnecessarily taken from them during their incarceration. We hope that this delay is down to a bureaucratic oversight and is not an official effort to prolong their suffering. We call for urgent interventions from members of the international community who have been observing the case to ensure the travel ban is lifted and that the clergymen are allowed to resume their normal lives. We also urge Sudanese officials of good will to allow these men to leave and end the ongoing harassment of Christians."

Sudan court clears South Sudan pastors of spying charges



Michael (R) was detained in December and Peter Yen Reith (L) in January

BBC (05.08.2015) - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33795358> - A court in Sudan has freed two South Sudanese Christian pastors after acquitting them of charges that include spying and crimes against the state.

Outside the court in the capital, Khartoum, the men's families rejoiced and sang, AFP news agency reports.

Yat Michael and Peter Yen Reith had faced a possible death sentence if convicted.

Sudan has a majority Muslim population governed by Islamic law, and Christians often complain of persecution.

Last year there was global condemnation when a Sudanese woman was sentenced to hang for apostasy - renouncing her religion - after marrying a Christian man.

Her sentence was overturned by an appeals court and she is now living in the US with her husband.

"I am feeling free because I was in jail for many months," [Mr Michael told the Christian Solidarity Worldwide advocacy group](#) after his release. He added that he felt as though he was "born again".

He was taken into custody last December after delivering a sermon in the capital.

His colleague, Mr Reith, was arrested the following month when he came to look for the clergyman.

The two, who belong to the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church, were found guilty of other minor charges.

Mr Michael was convicted of disturbing the peace and Mr Reith for participating in a criminal organisation.

"The sentence they served in prison is enough, release them immediately and return the mobile phones and laptops," Judge Ahmed Ghaboush is quoted by AFP as saying.

BBC Sudan analyst Mohanad Hashim says many in Khartoum believe the spying charges were fabricated and that the real battle with the authorities is over land.

Government officials want churches in the city to give up some of the vast tracts of land they own so that it can be used for investment, he says.

Churches have been reluctant to part with the land, even though their position has been weakened since South Sudan became independent in 2011.

Sudan: Country Profile



BBC (18.06.2015) - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094995> - Sudan, once the largest and one of the most geographically diverse states in Africa, split into two countries in July 2011 after the people of the south voted for independence.

The government of Sudan gave its blessing for an independent South Sudan, where the mainly Christian and Animist people had for decades been struggling against rule by the Arab Muslim north.

However, various outstanding secession issues - especially the question of shared oil revenues and the exact border demarcation - have continued to create tensions between the two successor states.

Sudan has long been beset by conflict. Two rounds of north-south civil war cost the lives of 1.5 million people, and a continuing conflict in the western region of Darfur has driven two million people from their homes and killed more than 200,000.

Sudan's centuries of association with Egypt formally ended in 1956, when joint British-Egyptian rule over the country ended.

At a glance

- **Humanitarian crisis:** Civil war in Darfur region is seen as "one of the worst nightmares in recent history"
- **Politics:** South Sudan seceded in July 2011 after opting for independence in a referendum
- **International:** President Omar Bashir faces war crimes charges over Darfur
- **Economy:** Oil production and revenues have been rising

Country profiles compiled by [BBC Monitoring](#)

Independence was rapidly overshadowed by unresolved constitutional tensions with the south, which flared up into full-scale civil war that the coup-prone central government was ill-equipped to suppress.

The military-led government of President Jaafar Numeiri agreed to autonomy for the south in 1972, but fighting broke out again in 1983.

After two years of bargaining, the rebels signed a comprehensive peace deal with the government to end the civil war in January 2005.

The accord provided for a high degree of autonomy for the south, and an option for it to secede. South Sudan seceded in July 2011, following a vote.

However, the grievances of the northern states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile remain unaddressed, as provisions laid out for them in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement were never fully implemented.

In Darfur, in western Sudan, the United Nations has accused pro-government Arab militias of a campaign of ethnic cleansing against non-Arab locals.

The conflict has strained relations between Sudan and Chad, to the west. Both countries have accused each other of cross-border incursions. There have been fears that the Darfur conflict could lead to a regional war.

The economic dividends of eventual peace could be great. Sudan has large areas of cultivatable land, as well as gold and cotton. Its oil reserves are ripe for further exploitation.

Women risk flogging for 'indecent' clothing

Amnesty Int'l (09.07.2015) - The Public Order Police have charged 10 female Christian students with "indecent dress" and subjected them to verbal abuse during their detention. The charge carries the punishment of flogging.

The Public Order Police (POP) arrested 12 female Christian students on 25 June. Ten of them were charged with "indecent dress", under Article 152 of Sudan's 1991 Criminal Act, while the other two were released. The POP subjected the students to degrading treatment and humiliating verbal abuse during their detention. Article 152 of the 1991 Criminal Act gives POP extensive powers to arrest any person for "indecent dress" and the punishment if found guilty is 40 lashes, or a fine, or with both. In practice the law is used exclusively against women.

The POP stopped the 12 students at 10 pm in front of the Evangelical Baptist Church in Khartoum North, where they had attended a ceremony, and took them to a local police station in Khartoum North.

According to information obtained by Amnesty International, the students are between 17 and 23 years old, and all are Christians, originally from the war-torn Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan state. At the time of their arrest, some were wearing trousers and others skirts. Two of the students were released about four hours after their arrest and the remaining 10 were released on bail at around 10 am on 27 June. The 10 were taken to court on 28 June where the charges against them were confirmed and court dates set. One student, Fardos Al Toum, 19, appeared in court on 6 July, wearing another dress

deemed indecent by the judge who, disregarding any due process, immediately sentenced her to a fine of 500 Sudanese pounds (\$83) or a month in prison. Her fine was paid by activists and her supporters and she will appear in court again in relation to the original charge. Another student, aged 17, appeared in court on 7 July and, because of her age, was transferred to a Juvenile Court.

The other nine students: Fardos Al Toum, 19; Ishraga James, 20; Uthan Omer Eljaily, 22; Diana Yagoub Abd Alrahman, 19; Seema Ali Osman, 20; Inas Mohamed Elkomani, 23; Rehab Omer Kakoum, 18; Nasra Omer Kakoum, 20; and Wigdan Abdallah Salih – will appear in court on 9, 13, 16 and 17 July according to their lawyer.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the Sudanese authorities to drop the charges against the 10 female Christian students immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on them to abolish the penalty of flogging, which violates the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Urging them to repeal Article 152 of the 1991 Criminal Act, which is vague and discriminatory and fails to adhere to Sudan's international human rights obligations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 AUGUST 2015 TO:

President
HE Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir
Office of the President
People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan
Email: info@presidency.gov.sd

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice
Awad Al Hassan Alnour
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 302
Al Nil Avenue
Khartoum, Sudan
Email: moj@moj.gov.sd

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Interior
Ismat Abdul-Rahman Zain Al-Abdin Ministry of Interior
PO Box 873
Khartoum, Sudan

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The flogging of women in Sudan for "indecent or immoral dress" under Article 152 of the 1991 Criminal Act came into the international spotlight in 2009 through the case of journalist Lubna Hussein, who was prosecuted for wearing trousers in 2009. Amnesty International has documented several cases of other women and girls convicted for "indecent or immoral dress" as the provision is applied in a discriminatory and disproportionate manner against women.

Article 152 states: "Whoever commits, in a public space, an act, or conducts himself in an indecent manner, or a manner contrary to public morality, or wears an indecent or

immoral dress, which causes annoyance to public feelings, shall be punished, with whipping, not exceeding 40 lashes, or with a fine, or with both. The act shall be contrary to public morals if it is regarded as such according to the standard of the person's religion or the custom of the country where the act takes place." Article 152 is part of a broader set of laws and practices, known as the public order regime, which allow corporal punishment for what is seen as immoral behaviour in public, or sometimes in private, affecting a wide range of people, particularly women, throughout Sudan.

The public order laws do not specify what is meant by "immoral" or "indecent" dress, so the POP have broad discretion to judge whether a person has acted in "an indecent manner, or a manner contrary to public morality" or "wears an indecent, or immoral dress, which causes annoyance to public feelings." The public order regime includes the POP and public order courts which can impose flogging of up to 40 lashes. Amnesty International opposes judicial corporal punishment such as flogging, which violates the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In an unrelated incident, but highlighting the extensive use of judicial corporal punishment in Sudan's legal system, on 6 July, a court in Khartoum tried and convicted three members of the opposition Sudanese Congress Party (SCP) including the Political Secretary of the SCP Mastour Ahmed Mohamed, under Article 69 of Sudan's 1991 Criminal Act article "the Disturbance of Public Peace", and they received 20 lashes. The three SCP members were arrested on 28 April following their speech in a public event in Omdurman criticising the outcome of Sudan's April 2015 elections.

The punishment of up to 40 lashes imposed under the 1991 Criminal Act is a clear violation of Article 33 of Sudan's 2005 Interim Constitution, Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political (ICCPR), to which the Republic of Sudan is a state party. In response to a complaint that was lodged in 2000, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in May 2003 found that the Republic of Sudan was in violation of Article 5 of the African Charter. It requested the Government of Sudan to immediately amend the Criminal Law of 1991, in conformity with its obligations under the African Charter and other relevant international human rights instruments; abolish the penalty of lashes; and to take appropriate measures to ensure compensation of the victims. The prohibition is also contained in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. As a signatory to the convention, Sudan must not act in a manner inconsistent with the object and purpose of the Convention.

South Sudan pastors' lawyer arrested day before they were due in court

World Watch Monitor (02.07.2015) - There is still no announcement from the Khartoum trial about the outcome for the two South Sudanese Presbyterian pastors, Yat Michael and Peter Yen, which is scheduled to end today after the judge has finished questioning the two men.

The judge indicated in the last hearing on 25 June that he will decide on 2 July whether to drop the case against them or allow it to continue, [in which case the two men will face the possibility of the death penalty](#) or life imprisonment in the event of a guilty verdict.

Michael and Yen were charged jointly with acts of criminal conspiracy (Article 21 of the Sudanese Penal Code); undermining the constitutional system (Article 50); espionage (Article 53); disclosure and receipt of official information or documents (Article 55); promoting hatred amongst sects (Article 64); breach of public peace (Article 69); and

offences relating to insulting religious beliefs (Article 125). Of the six charges, Articles 50 and 53 carry the death penalty or life imprisonment in the event of a guilty verdict.

Espionage

WWM has recently learned that they have been charged with espionage (Article 53 of the Sudan Penal Code) and promoting hatred amongst sects (Article 64), instead of waging war against the state (Article 51) and arousing feelings of discontent among regular forces (Article 62), as previously reported. The espionage charge (Article 53) carries the death penalty or life imprisonment in the event of a conviction.

Both men have been detained at the high security Kober Prison in Khartoum North since 1 March, before which they were being held incommunicado. The two are no longer in solitary confinement, but are reported to have been chained up. Michael was taken into custody on 21 December 2014 after preaching that morning at a church in Khartoum. Peter Yen was arrested on 11 January 2015 after he delivered a letter to the Religious Affairs Office in Khartoum asking about his colleague Michael's arrest in December.

Their wives have managed to see them, a source has told [Radio Tamazuj](#). Their visit last Thursday came after the judge allowed the two men to speak with their families for just 10 minutes. Prison authorities continue to ban regular visits despite it being unconstitutional to deny prisoners a visit from family members and friends.

A lawyer speaking on behalf of the detained pastors said: "This is meant to put more psychological pressures and warfare on the arrested pastors."

Pastors' lawyer arrested

In a new development, Mohamed Mustafa, the lawyer representing the two men, was arrested yesterday along with Pastor Hafez of the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church, the church where Yat Michael preached and spoke out against the persecution of Christians in Sudan, and an ongoing land dispute between the church and the government.

According to the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), local sources (unnamed for security) understood that the church asked the men's lawyer to come to the church because the police had showed up with engineers to demolish it under a government order. At the scene, lawyer Mustafa asked to review the order. It clearly authorised the government to destroy section 5D of the church compound, but the police were instructing them to destroy section 5H. The engineer took the matter up with the police present. Angered by the situation the police then arrested Pastor Hafez, put him in handcuffs and walked him to the police station through the public market. Mustafa stayed on the church compound and overheard the engineer continue to press the police officer on the matter. At that time, the police told Mustafa he had no right to stay on the property; he responded calmly that he was the legal representative, had done nothing wrong, and was there to observe that the court order was followed properly.

He was then arrested and taken to the police station and held for five hours before being released on bail. Both Hafez and Mustafa are now out on bail, but will have to defend their actions before a criminal court. They have been charged with violating article 99 of the Sudanese Penal Code of 1991 which criminalizes obstructing a public servant during the course of his duty. If convicted they could receive up to six months imprisonment, a fine or both.

"This arrest of [the pastors'] attorney is of great concern. While we are pleased that he was promptly released on bail, the arrest shows a potential that high-level individuals are

attempting to interfere in the judicial cases involving both the church land dispute and Pastors Michael and Yen," said Tiffany Barrans, International Legal Director at the American Centre for Law and Justice (ACLJ).

Meanwhile in another part of Khartoum, 12 Christian women were arrested on 25 June on public indecency charges by Sudan's Public Order Police after leaving a celebration service at the city's El Izba Baptist Church. They were charged with indecent or immoral dress under Article 152 of the Sudanese Criminal Code. The women, who were wearing skirts and trousers, were taken to a police station and forced to remove their clothes, which were submitted as evidence to the prosecutor.

"The penal Code of Sudan was introduced in 1991 and is based upon a narrow interpretation of Shari'a (Islamic law)," according to research by Amnesty International (AI). "It contains," it says, "legal provisions that amount to a denial of fundamental human rights including limitations on the rights and freedoms of non-Muslims. Sudan's legal system allows and promotes the conversion of the Sudanese people from Christianity and other religions to Islam, but makes proselytizing of Sudanese Muslims a crime punishable by flogging, and conversion from Islam is considered apostasy, and is punishable by death.

"Suppression of non-Muslim and Muslim minority groups and violations of freedom of religion is wide spread in Sudan, reports AI. Since 1989 a specific interpretation of Islam was allowed to dominate the country's laws, institutions and policies. As a result thousands of non-Muslims have been forced to convert to Islam, priests and church leaders persecuted and thousands of Christians punished according to Shari'a law," the report adds.

'Prisoners of conscience'

AI considers Michael and Yen to be "prisoners of conscience who were arrested, detained and charged solely because of the peaceful expression of their religious convictions".

The case of the two pastors has drawn worldwide attention as an abuse of human rights. One online campaign by [CitizenGo](#) has so far collected more than 100,000 signatures that will be sent to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Sudanese president. The campaign was motivated by the success of people power in helping free Meriam Ibrahim when she was detained by the Sudan government.

Michael and his wife arrived in Sudan on 13 December with their child whom they had brought to Khartoum for medical attention. During his visit he was asked to preach at the Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church, in the Khartoum suburb of Bahri, on Sunday 21 December 2014. During Michael's sermon he had apparently condemned the controversial sale of the church land and property and the treatment of Christians in Sudan.

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies ([ACJPS](#)) reported at the time that "the sale was made by the Community Council of the Church, a body appointed by the Government of Sudan's Ministry of Endowments and Guidance - which reportedly does not have a mandate to sell church land. Sudanese police forces violently raided the church on 2 December 2014 to break up a sit-in demonstration organized by members of the congregation protesting the sale. Thirty eight people were arrested and 20 convicted of disturbing the public peace and membership of criminal or terrorist organisations [following the protest]".

Peter Yen arrived in Sudan in September 2014 and was arrested on 11 January 2015 from his home attached to Al Gereif Church in Khartoum, after he delivered a letter to

the Religious Affairs Office in Khartoum asking about his colleague Michael's arrest in December. Yen had apparently also been vocal about his opposition to the sale of land by the Community Council and voiced concern on the situation facing Christians in Sudan.

ACJPS has stated "the serious criminal charges against Michael and Yen have been levied solely on the basis of their religious convictions and outspoken criticism of the ruling party, and as such, that their continued detention and criminal proceedings are discriminatory and in violation of constitutional and international legal guarantees of equality. There is also speculation that the trial of the two men is intended to send a message to other Christian leaders in Sudan to refrain from criticizing the treatment of Christian minorities in Sudan and the policies of the ruling party".

S Sudan pastors will face trial, judge rules

World Watch Monitor (02.07.2015) - A Sudanese judge has decided enough evidence exists to require two South Sudanese Presbyterian pastors to face trial on espionage and other charges that could carry the death penalty, according to a US-based religious-freedom group.

The American Center for Law & Justice [reported late Thursday](#) that the judge made the ruling on 2 July after a day-long hearing concerning the pastors, Yat Michael and Peter Yen.

The judge had indicated at a June 25 hearing that he would decide July 2 whether to drop the case against them or allow it to continue, in which case the two men [will face the possibility of the death penalty](#) or life imprisonment in the event of a guilty verdict.

The Washington, DC-based American Center for Law & Justice, which provides legal assistance to international religious-freedom cases, said the judge's ruling is not a conviction but means the pastors now must counter the charges by presenting evidence to demonstrate their innocence. Their lawyer, Muhaned Mustafa, has less than two weeks to prepare their case for the next hearing on 14 July. Mustafa will have only about 15 minutes with his clients, prior to the hearing, to prepare them.

At the end of those proceedings, the court will have the final opportunity to review all the evidence presented and drop the charges or convict the pastors.

During Wednesday's hearing the judge questioned both men about documents found on their computer after their arrests, which included internal church reports, maps that show the population and topography of Khartoum, Christian literature, and a study guide on the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS).

"All of these materials, with the exception of the internal church report and the study guide on NISS are publicly accessible materials," explains the ACLJ.

The pastors acknowledged having the internal church report, though both said they had never seen the study guide on NISS until it was presented in court. They had no knowledge of how it got on the computer.

Evidence brought by prosecution

Besides these documents, the only evidence brought by the prosecution against the Christian pastors was a sermon Michael gave on the Christian doctrines of their denomination.

At the conclusion of today's court hearing, their lawyer, Mustafa, requested better access to his clients, but the judge only had authority to grant him visitation at the court.

"Sudanese law grants sole discretion for visitation rights at the prison to the prison directorate, who in this case has previously denied requests for access," explained the ACLJ.

Denying the pastors access to their lawyer to prepare their case is a violation of rights guaranteed both under Sudanese law and international law. The attorney will appeal the matter to the prison authorities on 5 July.

Meanwhile the judge offered the attorney upto 15 minutes at the court to prepare his defense. The attorney protested that such time is not adequate to prepare a defense, let alone a defense for charge that carry the death penalty, but to no avail.

Both men will continue to be detained at the high security Kober Prison in Khartoum North, where they've been since 1 March. They are no longer in solitary confinement.

Michael and Yen were charged jointly with acts of criminal conspiracy (Article 21 of the Sudanese Penal Code); undermining the constitutional system (Article 50); espionage (Article 53); disclosure and receipt of official information or documents (Article 55); promoting hatred amongst sects (Article 64); breach of public peace (Article 69); and offences relating to insulting religious beliefs (Article 125). Of the six charges, Articles 50 and 53 carry the death penalty or life imprisonment in the event of a guilty verdict.

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Peter Yen arrived in Sudan in September 2014 and was arrested on 11 January 2015 from his home attached to Al Gereif Church in Khartoum, after he delivered a letter to the Religious Affairs Office in Khartoum asking about his colleague Michael's arrest in December. Yen had apparently also been vocal about his opposition to the sale of land by the Community Council and voiced concern on the situation facing Christians in Sudan.

ACJPS has stated "the serious criminal charges against Michael and Yen have been levied solely on the basis of their religious convictions and outspoken criticism of the ruling party, and as such, that their continued detention and criminal proceedings are discriminatory and in violation of constitutional and international legal guarantees of equality. There is also speculation that the trial of the two men is intended to send a message to other Christian leaders in Sudan to refrain from criticizing the treatment of Christian minorities in Sudan and the policies of the ruling party".

South Sudanese church leaders jailed in Sudan could face death penalty

Pastor says he is trusting God will intervene on their behalf

Morning Star News (08.06.2015) - <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/05/south-sudanese-church-leaders-jailed-in-sudan-charged-could-face-death-penalty/> - Sudanese authorities have charged two South Sudanese pastors under laws that call for the death penalty, their attorney said.

National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) officials have charged the Rev. Yat Michael and the Rev. Peter Yein Reith (also transliterated as Peter Yen Reith) with undermining the constitutional system (Article 50 of the Sudan Penal Code) and spying (Article 53) - offenses punishable by death or life imprisonment - and waging war against the state (Article 51), which calls for the death sentence, said the pastors' attorney.

They are also charged with inciting organized forces to complain and assaulting religious beliefs, which call for prison sentences, the attorney said.

"The charges are serious," the attorney, a Muslim, told Morning Star News. "However, we are doing everything possible to ensure their release. We hope to hear good news about their release in coming days."

NISS is manned by hard-line Islamists who are given broad powers to arrest Christians, black Africans, South Sudanese and other people lowly regarded in the country that President Omar al-Bashir has pledged will be fully Arabic and Islamic. The charges appear to be based solely on the two pastors' nationality, race and faith, sources said.

Sudan fought a civil war with south Sudanese from 1983 to 2005, and since June 2011 has been fighting a rebel group in the Nuba Mountains that has its roots in South Sudan, which became a separate country in 2011.

Michael was arrested on Dec. 21, 2014 after visiting a church service in Khartoum, and Reith was arrested on Jan. 11 after submitting a letter from leaders of their denomination, the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC), inquiring about the whereabouts of Michael.

Their location was unknown for months, violating international human rights agreements, but on April 30 they were transferred from Khartoum's downtown police station to a NISS detention center on Street 51 in Khartoum, Michael's wife told Morning Star News. On Monday (May 4) they were transferred to Omdurman Prison, she said.

Morning Star News managed to speak with Michael on Thursday (May 7).

"God will intervene and protect us even in prison despite the serious charges brought against us," the pastor said. "Thank you all for your prayers and concerns for us over this long period of imprisonment."

NISS officials have demanded \$12,000 from the SSPEC secretary general, the Rev. Philip Akway Obang, for the release of the pastors, sources said. Local church leaders expressed their outrage at the attempt to buy the pastors' freedom, saying they fear NISS would arrest other Christians and make the same demand in exchange for dropping charges.

A NISS officer who identified himself only as Jamal confirmed that the agency had demanded that the pastors pay \$6,000 each for the charges to be dropped.

The church that Michael had visited and encouraged in December, [Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church](#), was the subject of government harassment, arrests and demolition of part of its worship center as Muslim investors took it over. NISS officials appear to be determined to punish the pastors for their support of the embattled congregation, sources said.

The two pastors began a hunger strike on April 28 to protest their incarceration. The attorney said the charges against them were quietly filed in March, and that they are awaiting a hearing on Thursday (May 14) in Khartoum North.

The pastors' families have waited in agony, not knowing how they have been treated.

"We are still worried about their detention," Michael's wife said. "Let us continue to pray for them so that God can help them to be released."

Amnesty International has said holding the pastors incommunicado violates the Interim Constitution of Sudan, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, all of which legally bind the Sudanese Government and all its agents.

"Holding the detainees incommunicado increases their risk of being subjected to torture or ill treatment and/or enforced disappearance," Amnesty reported in February.

Other Christians in the Bahri congregation have also been arrested. Police in North Khartoum on Dec. 2 beat and arrested 38 Christians from the church that Michael encouraged and fined most of them. They were released later that night.

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.

Harassment, arrests and persecution of Christians have intensified since the secession of South Sudan in July 2011, when 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.

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.

Trial of S. Sudan pastors begins, then is delayed

WWM (19.05.2015) - After the May 19 start of the trial of Yat Michael and Peter Yein, the judge ordered a 12-day recess.

Nahmia Shaloka, a Sudanese lawyer who left the country because of his human rights activity and now lives in the United States, said a judge of Khartoum North (Bahri) Criminal Court set a May 31 date to resume the trial.

According to Shaloka, on May 19 a lawyer for the defence, Osman Almoubarak, told the Sudanese news website al-Taghyeer that the prosecutor showed to the court a CD, claiming that it contained an illegal speech given by Michael at the Presbyterian Evangelical Church of Khartoum North (Bahri). Almoubarak also produced a computer memory disk that he claimed belonged to Michael and contains evidence against him, according to Shaloka.

Original story

Two South Sudanese pastors being held in Omdurman prison in Khartoum could face the death sentence when their trial continues on 19 May.

World Watch Monitor reported in February that Yat Michael and Peter Yen (*also named as David Yein Reith in some reports*) were held in unknown locations after being arrested

during a visit to Khartoum, Sudan's capital, from their homes in South Sudan, which gained independence in 2011. On 4 May they were charged with a series of offences, two of which - undermining the constitutional system and waging war against the state - carry the possibility of the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Michael was taken into custody on 21 December after preaching that morning at the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) Khartoum Bahri congregation. After the service several men who identified themselves as officers from the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) demanded that Michael go with them, and took him away without further explanation. The next day the security forces went to Michael's temporary home and took some of his clothes and personal belongings. They informed his wife that he was being held in relation to an ongoing investigation but did not reveal any further details, whether he was under arrest or what the charges were.

Michael and his wife had taken their child to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, for medical attention but had been asked to preach at a church during their visit, sources told World Watch Monitor.

Arrested

Yen was arrested on 11 January after he delivered a letter to the Religious Affairs Office in Khartoum asking about his colleague Michael's arrest in December. Both men belong to the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church.

Their case was postponed until this week due to the availability of a representative of the NISS. The lawyer representing the two men believes the charges against them will be dropped, but the involvement of the NISS may lead to a different outcome.

Shaloka, the former Sudanese lawyer, said the NISS legal advisor will try to connect Michael's speech at the church to the charges filed against them.

"For me there is no evidence," Shaloka said. "So far the whole thing is to give their [the NISS] action legal justification. The NISS claim to have evidence and this will be clear at the hearing on May 19."

According to Amnesty International, the NISS is an agency that is above the law. Priscilla Nyagoah, a campaigner for Sudan and South Sudan at Amnesty International's regional office in east Africa, [said in a recent blog](#) that the Sudanese parliament amended its constitution in January to extend NISS' mandate to perform duties currently carried out by the armed forces and law enforcement agencies, adding that the amendment doesn't require the agency to abide by relevant international, regional and domestic law. "Conferring an intelligence agency such as the NISS with such a mandate, in addition to its already extensive powers of arrest, detention, search and seizure under the National Security Service Act, is particularly alarming," Nyagoah wrote.

Rights violations

Nyagoah is calling for a human rights-compliant legal framework for the NISS, which would subject its arrest and detention practices to judicial oversight, and ensures that NISS agents perpetrating human-rights violations are held to account. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights recently sent out a message against the impunity of the NISS, by declaring the Republic of Sudan guilty of violating the rights of three human-rights defenders while in NISS detention in November 2008. The decision, published in February this year, requests Sudan to pay adequate compensation to Monim Elgak, Amir Suleiman and Osman Hummeida and to prosecute all those responsible for the illegal incarceration and torture of the three.

At the continuation of their trial May 19, Michael and Yen will stand charged with disclosure and receipt of official information or documents, arousing feelings of discontent among regular forces, breach of public peace, and offences relating to insulting religious beliefs. They also will face charges of undermining the constitutional system, and waging war against the state, which carry the possibility of harsher penalties.

The church in Khartoum that Michael had been preaching at has suffered pressure from government authorities over land rights, resulting in [most of the church being destroyed](#) in December last year.

This is not the first time this year that a church building has been demolished by Sudanese authorities. In February and June 2014, churches were destroyed in Omdurman and Khartoum.

While South Sudan has a largely Christian population, Sudan is predominantly Muslim. However, many thousands of Southern Sudanese who fled the long civil war to live in the north are now so rooted there, they choose to remain. There are still churches in the north to meet their needs, although some have come under pressure in recent months.

Sudan's minister of religion, Shalil Abdullah, has said that the authorities would not issue permits for the construction of new churches.

Lawyers appeal court order to close Khartoum Bahri evangelical church

CSW (19.02.2015) - Lawyers representing the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church in North Khartoum are due to lodge an appeal today against a court decision to confiscate the remaining property at the site and permanently close the church.

On 18 February, police arrived at the church with an order from the Khartoum Civil Court to lock and seize the outer gates of the property. Lawyers representing the church have issued a technical challenge on the wording of the order as it does not identify the specific area of the church's property affected by the order.

The Bahri Evangelical Church is part of the Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church (SEPC) denomination and has been in an ongoing legal battle with the Sudanese authorities, who have attempted to sell church land to a Muslim businessman. In November 2014, congregants held a protest vigil in order to prevent NISS agents from gaining access to the land and illegally destroying and confiscating the property. In December 2014 the church was partially destroyed and 37 congregants arrested (See <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1811>).

The government maintains that the land was legally sold to the Muslim Businessman by a church committee. Church leaders later discovered that a secondary committee, backed by the government and formed in contravention of the SEPC's administrative processes, had entered into a contract with the Muslim Businessman. On 6 January 2015, a court ruled in favour of the legitimate church committee, but this ruling was later overturned by the Supreme Court on appeal.

The Sudanese authorities have also attempted to illegally sell other properties belonging to the SEPC. In December 2014, lawyers lodged a constitutional appeal (<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1815>) after the Ministry of Justice

issued a one week eviction notice to the church's tenants. The chairman of the SEPC council responsible for church buildings and land, Rafat Obid, has faced a campaign of harassment by the NISS as a result of his work on the committee.

On 21 December 2014, Rev Yat Michael, a South Sudanese pastor from the South Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church (SSEPC) who preached at the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church, was arrested by NISS agents. A second minister, Rev Peter Lein Reith, was arrested on 11 January 2015. Both men are still detained incommunicado in Khartoum.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "CSW is deeply concerned by these developments. The questionable legal avenues utilised by the Sudanese authorities to confiscate property belonging to the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church and other properties belonging to the SEPC are a clear attempt to financially weaken the Church and precipitate its permanent closure. These actions are in clear violation of Article 6 of Sudan's constitution, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Article 8 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), which guarantee the right to freedom of religion or belief, and to which Sudan is a signatory. The court order will effectively facilitate the illegal closure of yet another church at a time when the government has stated that the construction of new churches will no longer be permitted. We call upon the international community, and in particular the African Union, to hold Sudan to its obligations to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief and to guarantee the profession and free practice of religion as outlined in international statutes to which the nation is party."

Sudan arrests another South Sudanese pastor

Second church leader in less than three weeks held without charges.

Morning Star News (20.01.2015) – The second pastor of South Sudanese descent in less than three weeks has been arrested without charges in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, sources said.

Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Services (NISS) arrested the Rev. David Yein Reith of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church on Jan. 9 as he returned to his home at the Gerif West Bible School in Khartoum from a prayer meeting, said a source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Reith received a phone call earlier that day from someone threatening to "arrest" his wife and 1-year-old son if he failed to go to his home immediately.

"We will arrest your entire family should you fail to come home as soon as possible," the caller told the pastor, according to the source.

The pastor's wife has repeatedly asked NISS officials under what charge he is being held without an answer, she said.

"We are still interrogating him; he is in custody," one NISS official told her.

Though of South Sudanese descent, Reith has always lived in Khartoum. On Dec. 28 NISS officials arrested a visiting South Sudanese pastor from Juba, the [Rev. Yat Michael](#), after Sunday worship at Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church on Dec. 21. He is still in custody.

Authorities have repeatedly refused to allow Pastor Michael's family to visit him since his arrest, sources said.

"Each time they said they were going to arrange a visit for me, they continued to refuse my requests to visit my husband," said his wife, whose name is withheld for security reasons.

The Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church that Pastor Michael was visiting is a Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC)-congregation that has been the subject of harassment, arrests and demolition of part of its worship center as Muslim investors seek to take it over. 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.

Article 77 of the notorious Public Order Law of 1991 gives police broad powers to arrest Christians and other lowly regarded people without cause for "creating a public disturbance."

Pastor Michael had been invited to encourage the congregation to stand firm amid persecution.

[Five church leaders](#) arrested on Nov. 25 were released that same night.

Harassment, arrests and persecution of Christians have intensified since the secession of South Sudan in July 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 Khartoum Bahri Evangelical 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, 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.
