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SUDAN | Prison Conditions a Concern During Trial

South Sudanese pastors Yat Michael and Peter Reith are being held in separate cells in Kober Prison and are chained on a daily basis. Their most recent court appearance was June 15.

The two men are facing serious criminal charges including undermining the constitutional order and waging war against the state, both of which carry the death penalty or life imprisonment in the event of a guilty verdict.

Since being moved to Kober Prison, a high security facility in Khartoum North, the pastors have not been allowed to receive visits. They were allowed to meet with their wives and legal representatives at court June 15, the first time they have been able to do so since June 3.

The harsh conditions under which the pastors are currently held raise particular concerns for the well-being of Rev. Michael, who had travelled to Khartoum for medical treatment Dec. 13, the day before his arrest, and has not seen relevant medical professionals.

During the hearing June 15, the prosecution presented evidence from its main witness, a National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) officer. The next hearing was set for June 18, when it is anticipated the prosecution will conclude its case.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "We reiterate our call to the Sudanese authorities to regularize the detention of Rev. Michael and Rev Reith. The continued refusal to allow legal visits at Kober Prison and the conditions in which the pastors are being detained are in violation of their right to a fair trial, as articulated in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Sudan is a party. Furthermore, the fact that pastors are being chained amounts to degrading treatment, a violation of Article 7 of the ICCPR. We urge the Sudanese authorities to reinstate legal and family visits and to move the pastors to an appropriate facility. We also call for immediate and unfettered access to medical treatment for Rev Michael, in order to address his pre-existing medical condition, and urge the international community to hold Sudan accountable for any deterioration in his condition if access continues to be hindered or denied."