



7.2.15

SUDAN | Judge to Proceed with Pastor Trial

The trial judge in the case of South Sudanese pastors Rev. Yat Michael and Rev. Peter Reith decided July 2 that their case will proceed and their lawyers will have to contest all the charges levelled against the two men, including two which carry the death penalty or life imprisonment in the case of a conviction.

The next hearing will take place July 14 when the defense will present its case.

The pastors are charged jointly with 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.

Both Rev. Michael and Rev. Reith are still being detained at the high security Kober Prison but are no longer chained or in solitary confinement. The pastors are still allowed no visitors and can only meet with their families and legal team when attending trial hearings.

On July 1, Mohaned Mustafa, the pastors' chief counsel the pastors, was arrested along with Pastor Hafez of the Khartoum Bhari Evangelical Church, which is involved in a land dispute with the government, and released on bail after being charged with Obstructing a Public Servant from Performing the Duties of His Office. Pastor Hafez sought medical treatment after sustaining injuries in custody.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "We are disappointed to learn that the judge has decided to uphold the extreme and unwarranted charges against Rev. Michael and Rev. Reith. We continue to call for their immediate and unconditional release. The ongoing restrictions on their legal and family visits are not only distressing for the pastors and their families, but also constitute yet another hurdle for their legal team to overcome and a violation of fair trial principles, as articulated by Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sudan is a party. Moreover, the harassment and assault on Pastor Hafez is wholly unacceptable, and typifies an ongoing, discriminatory policy targeting religious and ethnic minorities that is officially sanctioned. The international community, and in particular the African Union, must impress upon Sudan its obligation to protect and promote freedom of religion or belief and the right to a fair trial."