



8.16.15

SUDAN | Woman Found Innocent of Public Indecency Charges

A Christian woman, Seema Ali Osman, was found innocent of indecent or immoral dress under Article 152 of the Sudanese Criminal Code on Aug. 16.

She was part of a group of Christian women from the Nuba Mountains who were arrested June 25 after leaving a celebration service at the El Izba Baptist Church in Khartoum.

Two of the women were released without charge while the remaining 10 were charged with indecent or immoral dress and tried at the Public Order Court in Khartoum. Seema Ali Osman was the last one to face trial. On Aug. 12, Hala Ibrahim, Ishraga James, Inas Mohamed Elkomani and Mawaheb Suliman were found innocent. Nasra Omer Kakoum, Wegdan Aba Alla Salih and Uthan Omer Eljaily were convicted and fined \$8. In July, Ferdoos Eltoum and Rehab Omer Kakoum, were found guilty and fined \$82.

Under Article 152 of the Sudanese Criminal Code, the Public Order Police have broad scope to define what constitutes indecent or immoral dress.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "We welcome Seema Ali Osman's release but continue to question the inconsistent handling of these women's cases, which appear to be part of an ongoing campaign of repression against ethnic and religious minorities in Sudan. We remain deeply concerned by the ambiguity and arbitrary application of the law, and renew our call for it to be clarified or repealed. The African Union and the rest of the international community must hold Sudan to account for its failure to respect the right to freedom of religion or belief, as outlined in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sudan is party."