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SUDAN | Church Minister Released, Another Remains Detained

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) learned that Rev. Kwa Shamal of the Sudan Church of Christ, who was arrested by National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) officers in December, was unconditionally released Jan. 16. His colleague, Rev. Hassan Abduraheem, and Christian activist Talahon Nigosi Kassa Ratta, who were also arrested in December, remain in detention.

Rev. Shamal was conditionally released Dec. 21 and required to report to the NISS office daily where he was held from 8 a.m. to midnight. The conditions of his release were waived Jan. 16.

Rev. Hassan Abduraheem, who was arrested on the same day as Rev. Shamal, remains in detention in an unknown location and without being charged with an offense. His wife submitted a request to visit her husband to the NISS office in Khartoum. Her request was not granted. The agency confirmed that Rev. Abduraheem was in its hands.

Christian activist Talahon Nigosi Kassa Ratta, who was arrested by NISS agents in Khartoum on Dec. 14, is also detained without charge. Ratta is a member of the Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church and an active campaigner against the confiscation of the church's property. He was last seen by his parents at Kober Men's Prison at the end of December but was subsequently transferred to an unknown location.

The arrests of the Shamal, Abduraheem and Ratta occurred in the same month that Pastor Hafiz Mengisto, Senior Minister of the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church, was tried and acquitted of obstructing a public servant from performing the duties of his office. Pastor Mengisto was initially arrested in July after he tried to correct the erroneous enforcement of a court order by the police. These cases underscore the growing and systematic harassment of Christian religious leaders in Sudan.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Whilst welcoming the unconditional release of

Rev. Kwa Shamal, we remain concerned by the continuing incarceration of Rev. Hassan Abduraheem and Talahon Nigosi Kassa Ratta. The arrest and detention of these men are arbitrary and violate their right to liberty and security of person, as articulated in article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 6 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, to which Sudan is a party. We call for their immediate and unconditional release and appeal to the international community, in particular the African Union to hold Sudan to its international obligations.”