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SUDAN | Ministry of Justice Withdraws Apostasy Case

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) learned the Sudanese Ministry of Justice withdrew the case against 25 Muslims, who were due to stand trial for apostasy on Feb. 9.

The group of 22 men and three minors was arrested by local police on Nov. 2 and 3 in the Mayu neighborhood of South Khartoum. They were formally charged with apostasy Dec. 14 and a trial date was set for Feb. 9.

The three minors were released on bail on Nov. 30, and the rest were released Dec. 14 after being formally charged. Their lawyers were informed Feb. 9 that the Ministry of Justice had withdrawn the case from the criminal court.

The group was charged with apostasy because although they had not converted from Islam, they followed an interpretation that differs from that of the ruling regime.

In a related development on Feb. 29, two of the 25 defendants, Abderahman Saied Enrahim and Emam Alyas Mohamed, were arrested while discussing the Qur'an. They were charged with public nuisance and released on bail Feb. 29. Their trial began March 2 and is ongoing.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Whilst we welcome the withdrawal of this case, we remain deeply concerned by the existing apostasy legislation. We continue to call on the Sudanese government to review it and to ensure that it complies with Sudan's undertakings to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief, as articulated in the 2005 constitution and the international covenants to which it is party. We are also concerned by the public nuisance case against Abderahman Saied Enrahim and Emam Alyas Mohamed. We call for the charge against these men to be dropped without conditions, and for the government to protect their right to freedom of expression, which is essential in facilitating the right to freedom of religion or belief."