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SUDAN | Clergymen Made to Report to National Security and Intelligence Service

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) learned that two senior clergymen and a lay member of the Sudan Church of Christ (SCC) are obliged to report daily to the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) since being detained, questioned and released by NISS agents earlier this month.

Rev. Ayub Tilyab, an SCC minister and President of the SCC National Council, and Rev. Yagoub Naway, a minister from the SCC in Ombadda and Vice President of the SCC Ombadda Area Council, were arrested on the morning of March 21 by NISS agents and held for questioning. They were released later in the day without charge on the condition that they report to the NISS office daily. Church member Benjamin Breema was also arrested by NISS on March 14 and released on the same day without charge but is required to report to the NISS office daily.

The arrest and conditional release of Reverends Tilyab and Naway and Breema are the latest in a series of arrests of religious leaders and adherents by NISS agents in the last four months. On March 13, Rev. Yamani Abraha and Rev. Filemon Hassan of the El Izba Baptist Church in Khartoum were arrested and released without charge. NISS agents confiscated their personal property, including laptop computers and mobile phones. Both men are required to report to the NISS offices daily.

The pattern of arrests began Dec. 14, when Christian activist and member of the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church, Talahon Nigosi Kassa Ratta was arrested. Ratta was detained without charge since his arrest. He was last seen by his parents at Kober Men's Prison at the end of December 2015 but was subsequently transferred to an unknown location. His family has requested visitation rights but has been denied.

Following Ratta's arrest on Dec. 19, Reverends Kwa Shamal and Hassan Abduraheem, both ministers at the SCC, were arrested at their homes in Khartoum Bahri and Omdurman,

respectively. Rev. Shamal was released the following day on the condition he report daily to the NISS offices. His reporting conditions were removed Jan. 16 but were reinstated in February. Rev. Hassan Abduraheem is detained in an unknown location, without being charged or allowed to meet with a lawyer. His family is concerned for his health as he suffers from stomach ulcers and has regularly submitted requests to visit him, which have not been granted. On Feb. 18, the Secretary General of the SCC; Rev. Ali Abdurahman submitted a letter of complaint to the Council of Human Rights in the Ministry of Justice requesting that Rev. Abduraheem should either be released unconditionally or brought before a judicial authority and charged. The church is still waiting for a reply.

Rev. Abdurahman said the daily reporting condition placed on the Reverends Tilyab, Naway, and Shamal and the incommunicado detention of Rev. Abduraheem has caused daily church work in certain areas of Khatoum State to come to a halt as church leaders are obliged to spend all day at the NISS offices. The clergymen said the reporting period can last from 8 a.m. to midnight and that often NISS agents do not interact with them, merely requiring them to wait until they are dismissed for the day.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are deeply concerned by the pattern of arrests and detentions of religious leaders and church members. Reverends Naway, Abraha, Hassan, Tilyab and Shamal and Mr Breama have not been charged with any crime, yet are required to report to NISS offices daily, which exemplifies the significant and continuing harassment of Christian minorities in Sudan. Their daily detention at the NISS offices, which is reported to extend at times from 8am to midnight, is an unjustifiable deprivation of their liberty and is tantamount to arbitrary detention in violation of Article 9:1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Sudan has both signed and ratified. Furthermore, the impact of these daily detentions on the clergymen's religious duties amounts to a de facto interference in their right to freedom of religion or belief under article 18 of the ICCPR. We call on the Sudanese authorities to lift the daily reporting conditions placed on Reverends Naway, Abraha, Hassan, Tilyab and Shamal and Mr. Breama. Furthermore we call for the immediate and unconditional release of Rev. Abduraheem and Mr. Ratta. Their detention for over three months without charge, and without regular access to their families or a legal representative amounts to arbitrary detention and violates the principles of fair trial as articulated in article 14:3 of the ICCPR."