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SUDAN | Detained Pastors Ask to Submit Case

After several months in detention without charge, Sudanese Reverends Hassan Abduraheem and Kuwa Shamal asked the prosecutor to either send their case to court or release them.

The clergy members also asked to be transferred to a formal prison facility where their basic needs can be met.

Rev. Abduraheem has been held in the attorney general's custody since May 9, while Rev. Shamal has been detained since May 24. The clergymen raised concerns about their safety and living conditions on July 31. Both are currently in police holding cells, which are ordinarily used to detain suspected criminals for a week to 10 days while the prosecutor investigates potential criminal charges.

One of the clergymen's lawyers informed CSW that "they are held in a small room where sometimes up to 25 men are also detained. Their diet is poor and their health has suffered." Last week, Rev. Shamal contracted malaria, and despite requests made by his legal team to the prosecutor for him to receive medical attention, he was only treated after his church gathered finances for treatment. Doctors also found he was suffering from a blood infection caused by poor diet.

The men are being investigated for national security crimes and have not been formally charged. In June, their lawyers requested they be released on bail until they are formally charged. The request was denied due to the seriousness of the potential charges.

Both men were arrested in December 2015, following a crackdown by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) on Christians across the country. Rev. Abduraheem was held incommunicado by NISS until May 2016, when he was transferred to the attorney general's custody. Rev. Kuwa Shamal was initially detained in December 2015 and released on the condition he reported daily to NISS. In May 2016, he was arrested again and held in the attorney general's custody.

In another development, on Aug. 1 two churches in the El Haj Yousif neighborhood of Khartoum Bahri were notified of an order to confiscate and demolish their church buildings. Leaders of the Sudan Church of Christ and the Episcopal Church were given 72 hours notice by the

government's lands authority of the decision. The government has not executed the order, but Church leaders are working with lawyers to prevent any action being taken without a court decision. Both churches have been meeting in the area since the early 1990s.

Confiscations and demolitions of churches have increased since South Sudan's independence, and the government has stated repeatedly that new church licenses will not be issued, leaving a number of congregations without a place of worship.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are deeply concerned to learn of the unsanitary and unsafe conditions in which Reverends Hassan Abduraheem and Kuwa Shamal are being held. We echo their request for the prosecutor to either submit their case to court or release them immediately and unconditionally. Their prolonged detention in police custody is highly irregular and falls short of the reasonable time frame articulated in article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sudan is a party. We are also alarmed by the decision to confiscate church buildings belonging to the Episcopal Church and the Sudan Church of Christ. We urge the government to reverse this decision, in accordance with constitutional guarantees of the right to freedom of religion or belief, which includes ownership and access to places of worship."