



8.11.16

## **SUDAN | Reverends Shamal, Abduraheem Charged with National Security Crimes**

Reverends Hassan Abduraheem and Kuwa Shamal, who have been in held without charge in police holding cells for several months, were moved to Al-Huda Prison, in North Omdurman, on Aug. 11. Their first trial date is set for Aug. 14.

Rev. Abduraheem, who has been in detention since December 2015, and Rev. Shamal, who has been held since May, are charged jointly with Abdulmonem Abdumawla, a graduate from Darfur who has been in detention since December 2015.

The men are accused of at least seven crimes including: complicity to execute a criminal agreement (Article 21 of the Sudanese Criminal Code); waging war against the state (Article 51); espionage (Article 53); calling for opposition of the public authority by violence or criminal force (Article 63); exciting hatred between classes (Article 64); propagation of false news article (Article 66); and entry and photograph of military areas and equipment (Article 57). The maximum sentence for waging war against the state (article 51) and espionage (article 53) is the death penalty.

The case against the three men revolves around a request for medical assistance from a young Darfuri man named Ali Omer. Omer was injured during a demonstration at the Quran Karim University in Omdurman in mid-2015 and was left with severe burns that require regular medical care. His friend, Abdumawla, began collecting funds for medical treatment from various organizations and individuals. Through a colleague, Abdumawla was put in contact with Rev. Abduraheem, who donated money for Omer's treatment.

In April 2015, a senior member of the student wing of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) died when 150 NCP students violently attacked Darfuri students who were holding a meeting at the Sharg El Nil College in Khartoum. Since that incident, Darfuri students have been increasingly targeted by the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS). By May 2015, over 100 Darfuri students were detained by NISS in Khartoum. During 2016, NISS has violently suppressed peaceful student demonstrations against government repression.

The case against Rev. Shamal appears to be related to his friendship with Rev. Abduraheem and his senior position in the Sudan Church of Christ.

This is the second consecutive year the Sudanese authorities have charged church leaders with crimes that carry the death penalty. Reverends Yat Michael and Peter Reith, who faced similar charges, were released in August 2015.

Since the separation of South Sudan, President al Bashir has repeatedly called for a constitution based solely on Shari'a law, which would offer no guarantees for religious minorities. The case against Reverends Abduraheem and Shamal comes at a time when severe restrictions are being applied against Christians by the government through NISS, which has arrested six clergymen and two lay members from three denominations since December 2015, requiring them to report to their offices daily as a condition of release. Additionally, several church buildings are under threat of demolition or seizure.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are deeply concerned to learn of the serious charges levelled against Reverend Hassan Abduraheem and Mr. Abdulmonem Abdumawla simply for seeking to assist with medical expenses, and against Reverend Kuwa Shamal merely for being a Christian and a friend of Reverend Abduraheem. These innocent men now face the possibility of a death sentence on evidence that would not justify an arrest, let alone a conviction, given its paucity. We call on the Sudanese Government to ensure that this trial is conducted with respect to Fair Trial Principles, which include regular access to legal representatives and family members. We also urge the government to end the harassment and targeting of Darfuri students and Christians by NISS and to uphold the rights of every Sudanese citizen, regardless of their religion or ethnicity."