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SUDAN | Prison Authorities Fail to Transport Clergymen

Rev. Hassan Abduraheem, Rev. Kuwa Shamal and Abdulmonem Abdumawla missed their first court hearing Aug. 14 after prison authorities failed to transport them there.

During the short hearing, the judge confirmed the charges against the men and set a date for the next hearing on Aug. 21.

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 photography 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.

Rev. Abduraheem has been detained since December 2015, while Rev. Shamal has been held since May 2016, and Abdumawla has been detained since December 2015. The men were moved to Al-Huda Prison in Omdurman on Aug. 11 after spending a week at Omdurman Men's Prison which is a minimum security facility. No reason was given for the transfer, but their lawyer raised concerns about the distance of the facility from Khartoum, where their families reside, and the prison's history of failing to transport defendants to court hearings.

The case against Rev. Abduraheem and Abdumawla revolves around a request for assistance with medical costs 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. 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.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are seriously concerned that the trial of Rev. Abduraheem, Mr. Abdumawla and Rev. Shamal began in their absence. The serious charges levelled against Rev. Abduraheem and Mr. Abdumawla simply for seeking to assist with medical expenses, and against Rev. Shamal merely for being a

Christian and a friend of Rev. Abduraheem, have no foundation or merit. We call on the Sudanese Government to ensure that this trial is conducted with respect to Fair Trial Principles, which includes at the minimum ensuring that the men are present at every hearing, and have regular access to legal representatives and family members. We also urge the government to end the harassment and targeting of religious and ethnic minorities by NISS, and to uphold the civil rights of every Sudanese citizen.”