



8.22.16

SUDAN | Clergymen Appear In Court

Reverends Hassan Abduraheem and Kuwa Shamal appeared in court Aug. 21 along with Abdulmonem Abdumawla to hear the investigator outline the evidence against them. The next hearing is scheduled for Monday, Aug. 29.

Rev. Abduraheem is a senior minister and Vice Moderator of the Sudan Church of Christ and Rev. Shamal is a senior minister and Head of the Sudan Church of Christ Missions Committee. Together with Abdumawla they are accused of at least seven crimes, including waging war against the state (Article 51 of the Sudanese Criminal Code) and espionage (Article 53), which carry the death penalty as the maximum sentence.

The hearing lasted four hours and was conducted amid tight security with restricted access to the public gallery. Several church leaders were permitted access to the court room, while outside the courthouse approximately 100 Christians from Khartoum, representing several denominations, gathered to sing hymns for the duration of the hearing.

Rev. Abduraheem has been detained since December 2015, while Rev. Shamal has been held since May 2016. 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. Their lawyer has raised concerns about Al-Huda Prison's history of not providing transport for defendants to court hearings, as evidenced by the failure to send the men to court for their first hearing last week. The men have also been denied access to their lawyer since being transferred to Al Huda Prison.

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 in 2013 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, "It is wholly unacceptable that this trial has proceeded despite the fact that the defendants have had limited access to their legal team. We call on the Sudanese Government to ensure that the trial is conducted with

respect to Fair Trial Principles, which includes, at the minimum, ensuring that the men have regular access to legal representatives and family members, and are present at every hearing. We are also deeply concerned by the use of serious criminal charges 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. We urge the government to end the harassment and targeting of religious and ethnic minorities by the security services, and to uphold the civil rights of all Sudanese citizens.”