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SUDAN | Family Visits Finally Permitted for Clergymen

As the prosecution in the trial of Rev. Hassan Abduraheem, Rev. Kuwa Shamal and Abdulmonem Abdumawla continues to outline its case, their families have finally been allowed to visit them in prison.

Rev. Abduraheem, Rev. Shamal and Abdumawla 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.

During hearings Aug. 29, Sept. 1 and Sept. 5, the prosecutor gave the case investigator the opportunity to outline the evidence allegedly gathered against the men.

Reverends Abduraheem and Shamal have been held since December 2015 and May 2016, respectively. Abdumawla has also been detained since December 2015. The men were transferred to Al-Huda Prison in Omdurman on July 11. On Aug. 29, they were permitted family visits and regular access to their legal team for the first time after several requests.

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 his medical expenses from various organizations and individuals. Through a colleague, Abdumawla was put in contact with Rev. Abduraheem, who donated money toward 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, "These men have committed no crime. Rev. Abduraheem and Mr. Abdumawla responded with compassion to a request for medical assistance and Rev. Shamal's only connection to this case is his friendship with Rev. Abduraheem and his senior position as a church leader. We urge the government to end the harassment and targeting of religious and ethnic minorities by the security services, as has clearly occurred in this case, and to uphold the civil rights of all Sudanese citizens. While commending the decision to allow these men to receive visits from their families and legal

representatives, we call on the government to ensure this access continues for the duration of the trial in keeping with fair trial principles.”