



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN

Presidents of the European Union, Commission and Parliament call on Sudan to revoke inhumane apostasy verdict



The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy and the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz together with all religious leaders participating at this year's high-level meeting express their deepest dismay and concern with the fate of Mrs Meriam Yahya Ibrahim, who has been sentenced to a hundred lashes and sentenced to death by hanging on charges of apostasy and adultery. She recently gave birth to a baby girl while in prison. The above mentioned Presidents of EU institutions as well as all religious leaders present at the high-level meeting which include Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, underline Sudan's international obligation to protect the freedom of religion and belief and unanimously call upon the responsible Sudanese authorities and appeal courts to revoke this inhumane verdict and release Mrs Meriam with the utmost urgency.

The participants in today's meeting welcome the fact that the Court of Appeal has accepted the appeal and demand that the Sudanese government – in line with universal human rights - to repeal any legal provisions that penalise or discriminate against individuals for their religious beliefs or for changing their religion or beliefs or for inducing others to change a religion or belief, especially when cases of apostasy, heterodoxy, or conversion are punishable by death.

This is in line with Sudan being privy to the UN charter on Human Rights.

Freedom of Religion and belief is a universal human right that is valued highly by the European Union and needs to be protected everywhere and for everyone. To underline the Union's strong



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commitment to the protection of freedom of religion and belief, the European Union in June 2013 adopted Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief.

Background:

In late 2013 Meriam Yahya Ibrahim, daughter of an Ethiopian Christian mother and Sudanese Muslim father was accused of adultery by her father's side of the family. The apostasy accusation was added in December 2013. As the father left the family when Meriam Ibrahim was six years old, she was raised as a Christian. She married a Sudanese-American. The verdict at the court of first instance was delivered on 12 May 2014, giving Meriam Ibrahim three days to renounce Christianity. On 15 May 2014, the verdict was reconfirmed as Meriam Ibrahim chose not to convert to Islam. On 27 May 2014 she gave birth to a baby girl at the prison clinic. She is imprisoned along with her 20-month-old son. On 5 May her file was successfully transferred to the Appeal Court.

Sudan has ratified the relevant UN and African Union conventions and thereby has an international obligation to defend and promote freedom of religion or belief, which notably includes the right to adopt, exchange or abandon one's religion or belief of one's own free will.

The Delegation of the European Union to Sudan in Khartoum is closely following the case. It has hosted a series of meetings with the lawyer and the EU Human Rights Counsellors, recalling the EU Guidelines on freedom of religion and belief of 2013. Freedom of religion was also raised in the EU's recent local statement on the national dialogue on 28 May 2014. The issue was raised at various government levels, including with a presidential advisor. In several EU Member States the respective Sudanese Ambassadors have been summoned regarding the case.