

# Bottom Line: Sudanese Mom Meriam Ibrahim Freed, but Not Free (For Now)

After being re-arrested less than a day after being released from death row for her Christian faith, Meriam Ibrahim and her American family have reportedly been released from the custody of Sudanese police forces on the condition that they not leave Sudan, as charges may be brought against them.

They are not free.

Meriam and her American family were about to board a flight to freedom earlier this week, when 40 members of Sudan's National Intelligence Security Service (known as the "Agents of Fear") detained her along with her American husband and her two American kids—Martin, a toddler, and Maya, a newborn baby girl. After being detained at the airport, Meriam and her American family were arrested and taken to the police station.

Sudan is accusing Meriam of attempting to use an "illegal [false] travel document" in trying to leave the country and is accusing her husband—a U.S. citizen—of being an accomplice. It is unclear from reports if Sudan has formally charged Meriam with a crime, one that could carry with it a seven-year prison sentence, or whether they are still investigating the allegations.

Regardless, the fact remains that Meriam, her American husband, and her American kids are not free to leave the country.

Meriam's attorney stated, "Meriam was released after a guarantor was found, but, of course, she would not be able to leave the country." Unlike bail in the U.S., in Sudan a guarantor would not just forfeit money, that person may

actually have to stand in the place of Meriam criminally were she to flee the country.

According to press accounts, her lawyer also stated that Meriam and her American family are now in the U.S. embassy. This is a critically important development for her safety. However, they are not free to leave Sudan.

The United States must never let Meriam and her family who are U.S. citizens leave their sight from this point forward. There were reports that when Meriam was taken into custody at the airport, it was done in the presence of U.S. diplomatic personnel. This can never happen again.

Yesterday, a U.S. State Department spokesperson said that "from our perspective, Meriam has all of the documents she needs to travel to and enter the United States. It's up to the Government of Sudan to allow her to exit the country."

Later that day the State Department released a short statement, providing:

"The State Department has received confirmation that Meriam Ibrahim Ishag has been released on bail and is no longer being detained at a Sudanese police station. She and her family are in a safe location and the Government of Sudan has assured us of the family's continued safety. The Embassy remains highly engaged in Ms. Ishag's case. We will provide more information as it becomes available consistent with privacy laws."

The Obama Administration, and the State Department in particular, must continue to aggressively demand freedom for Meriam and her American family. While not physically in the custody of the Sudanese government at the present time, Meriam and her American family are not truly free until they are safely in America.

It would be an act of diplomatic malpractice were the U.S. to allow Meriam and her American family to fall back into the

hands of the Sudanese government—the government that just days ago planned to execute her for her Christian faith.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans have demanded Meriam's freedom. Meriam expressed her gratitude for that support when she left the police station, telling the BBC, "I would like to thank those who stood beside me."

*At the ACLJ, we will not rest until Meriam, Martin, Maya, and Daniel, their American husband and father, are safely home. Join us by urging the Obama Administration to take direct action to bring them home. Sign the petition at . And please continue to pray.*