

Islamists Suspected in Abduction of Christian Girl in Sudan

A Christian widow in north Sudan is agonizing over the kidnapping of her daughter eight months ago by suspected Islamic extremists in Khartoum.

"Since my daughter was kidnapped, I have been living in a state of fear and terror," said Ikhlas Anglo, 35, a mother of two daughters.

She said her 15-year-old daughter, Hiba Abdelfadil Anglo, went missing while returning from the Ministry of Education in Khartoum on June 27, 2010. Hiba, a member of Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Khartoum, had gone to the education ministry office to obtain her transcripts for entry to secondary school.

Two days later, the family received threatening telephone calls and SMS messages from the kidnappers telling them to pay 1,500 Sudanese pounds (US\$560) in order to secure her return.

"Don't you want to have this slave back?" one of the kidnappers told Anglo from an unknown location by cell phone, she said.

Anglo and others said they believe the kidnappers are Muslim extremists who have targeted them because they are Christians, and that police are aiding the criminals. She said that when she went to a police station to open a case, police bluntly told her she must first leave Christianity for Islam.

"You must convert to Islam if you want your daughter back," officer Fakhr El-Dean Mustafa of the Family and Child Protection Unit told Anglo, she said. Recently transferred to

another station, Mustafa was not immediately available for comment.

A relative of the girl said police are fully involved in the crime, as officers had traced the phone number of the kidnappers but were reluctant to admit that to the girl's family.

"The police have a direct link with the kidnappers," the relative said.

Adding to the anguish of the kidnapped girl's family was Anglo's dismissal from her job when she took time off to search for Hiba. Anglo said her supervisor at Asia Health Center, where she had worked for many years as a cleaner, had told her to report back to work after recovering her daughter, but after a month she was surprised to learn that she had been fired as of July 1, 2010.

"They dismissed me because I was looking for my daughter, although they have given me permission," she said.

Christians in north Sudan are anticipating increased persecution due to a referendum that gave the right of self-determination to the people of south Sudan, the majority of whom are Christians. On Jan. 9, south Sudan voted for secession in order to establish a zone free of sharia (Islamic law). Northern Christians fear further dangers after July 9, when south Sudan will officially become an independent nation.

President Omar al-Bashir, wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity in Darfur, has stated that the rights of southern citizens remaining in the north after secession will be respected. But Christians' fears grew after he said in December that an altered constitution would be based on sharia and that Islam would be the official religion.

Nearly four months ago, police allegedly helped a Muslim businessman to seize property belonging to the Sudan

Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Khartoum (See , “Police in Sudan Aid Muslim’s Effort to Take Over Church Plot,” Oct. 25, 2010).