

Pastor Stabbed to Death in Church School

A Sudanese Christian was killed earlier this week while participating in a peaceful protest against the government's attempted appropriation of a Christian school.

Younan Abdulla, part of the Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church (SEPC), was participating in the three-day protest after the government-linked committee in 2016 authorized the sale of the land on which the school is situated without the school's consent.

A second church member, Ayoub Kumama, also suffered stab wounds. He was taken to hospital but has since been discharged.

Bahri Evangelical Church, a SEPC church of which Mr. Abdulla was a member, has long been in a dispute with a committee linked to the government, which wants to buy the land on which the SEPC-owned school is situated.

According to reports, around 20 people armed with knives and other weapons attacked the protestors, some of whom are thought to be linked to the committee, which was set up in contravention of Sudanese law.

Police made one arrest. According to the charity Middle East Concern (MEC), Shamshoun Hamoud, a member of the committee, was arrested after eyewitnesses identified him as the person who stabbed Mr. Abdulla. The charity noted that no more arrests were made despite more people being involved in the attack.

MEC wrote: "The police were present but failed to intervene to protect those who were attacked. They also failed to help Younan after he was stabbed."

School staff protesting against the proposed sale had been arrested on previous occasions—last month and in July of last year.

Prior to this attack, the police had repeatedly arrested Christians in peaceful protests at the school, including Mr. Abdulla and the school's headmaster on March 16.

Mr. Abdulla's funeral was held on Tuesday (April 4), and he is survived by his widow and two young children. The service was attended by senior representatives of the U.S. and U.K. embassies, MEC reported.

A foreign office spokesperson confirmed religious freedom in Sudan "remains a concern for the UK."

The charity Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) said that Khartoum's targeting of the SEPC was part of its drive to "diminish or remove the Christian presence from Sudan".

CSW noted that the Khartoum Bahri Administrative Court last week rejected a case brought by 25 churches challenging a government order to demolish their places of worship. The 25 churches belong to denominations including the Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Sudan Church of Christ, Jehovah Witness and Pentecostal Churches.

The harassment of Christians has intensified since the secession of South Sudan in 2011, when Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir vowed to adopt a strict interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law) and many Christians left for the newly created country. {eo}

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