

Sudanese Christian Mom Set to Be Freed, Says Lawyer

A Sudanese Christian detained since Tuesday after having her death sentence overturned is expected to be released when a guarantor is found to ensure she does not flee the country, in a case that has provoked international outrage.

Mariam Yahya Ibrahim was freed on Monday after an appeals court revoked a death sentence imposed on her for having allegedly converted from Islam to marry her Christian husband. The ruling came after what the government called unprecedented international pressure.

But the 27-year-old was detained again on Tuesday for trying to use documents issued by the embassy of South Sudan to fly out of Khartoum with her American-South Sudanese husband and their two children, deepening the diplomatic wrangle over her fate.

“The defense lawyer is looking for a Sudanese person who has a residence and workplace in the area of the police station to pledge in writing that he would get Mariam to the authorities whenever they ask for her,” said lawyer Al-Sharif Ali.

The lawyer said that the process was intended to prevent Ibrahim from leaving for the United States with her family.

Despite lifting her death sentence, Sudan does not recognize Ibrahim as a Christian and therefore does not recognize her marriage, as Muslim women are not permitted to marry Christian men under the Islamic laws applied in the African country.

South Sudan, which has a majority Christian population, became independent from Sudan after a public vote in 2011 that ended years of civil war between the two states.

Ibrahim's case triggered an international outcry and was closely monitored by Washington and London, which last month summoned the Sudanese charge d'affaires to protest against Ibrahim's initial death sentence and urged Sudan to uphold its international obligations on freedom of religion and belief.

South Sudan's presidential spokesman said Ibrahim's American husband was a South Sudanese citizen and that was the reason his family's travel documents were issued from the South Sudan embassy in Khartoum.

A U.S. spokeswoman said on Thursday that Ibrahim had all the documents she needed to travel to the United States.

"It's up to the government of Sudan to allow her to exit the country," spokeswoman Marie Harf told a regular State Department news briefing.

"We are in communication with the Sudanese Foreign Ministry to ensure that she and her family will be free to travel as quickly as possible."

The United States has imposed economic sanctions on Sudan since 1997 over alleged human rights violations. It intensified sanctions in 2006 over Khartoum's actions in its conflict with rebels in the western region of Darfur.

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