

Ambassador Ahlam Abdelgalil Abuzeid Ali

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the court cases targeting church leaders in Sudan. In particular, I would like to raise to your attention the cases of Rev. Yahia Abdelrahim Nalu and Rev. Sidiq Abdalla who are pastors in the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC). These two church leaders became homeless after the police raided their church-owned houses on 15 August 2017 and evicted them and their families. On 3 December 2017, Judge Adam Tahir Haj Adam rejected their appeal, even though the order that warranted eviction referred to another house (no. 567), not no. 772, where one of the church leaders lived.

Your Excellency, I am concerned that these cases are part of a campaign to take possession of church property. In addition to the cases of Rev. Nalu and Rev. Abdalla, sixty church leaders in SPEC and Sudan Church of Christ (SCOC) have been summoned to court because of their refusal to relinquish church owned property. The government has enabled these cases to emerge by illegally appointing community councils within SPEC and SCOC. These illegitimate councils have started to sell church properties to a businessman who now claims ownership of the properties.

In general, conditions for Christians have deteriorated since the secession of South Sudan in 2011. Since 2012, Sudanese authorities has expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed church buildings claiming that they belonged to South Sudanese. The increasing harassment of Christians in Sudan during the past years is deeply disturbing. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights article 18 gives people the right to "have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice". The discrimination of Christians based on their faith represents a grave injustice and a severe breach of their human rights.

I humbly ask for your intervention to ensure that:

- the church-owned houses where Rev. Nalu and Rev. Abdalla resided are protected against demolition and restored to its rightful owners;
- the sixty other Christians who have been summoned to court will be given a fair hearing in accordance with international human rights standard;
- the Sudanese government will protect churches in Sudan against unlawful attempts to take possession of church property.

I appreciate, in advance, any actions you might take in this regard.

Yours sincerely,