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SUDAN | Concerns Raised Over Use of Torture

CSW is deeply concerned for the situation of Christians in Sudan's Darfur region after 12 men were arrested by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) in October. Nine of the men were accused of apostasy and subjected to severe torture.

The men were arrested Oct. 13 while they were meeting at the home of a church leader in Nyala, South Darfur. Three of the men are originally from the Nuba Mountains and were released without charge after two hours of questioning. The rest of the group were subjected to severe torture, accused of apostasy and pressured to recant their Christian faith. Eight of the men were released Oct. 21 after agreeing to the demands of the NISS officers and were charged with public nuisance and released on bail. Upon release, at least four men required serious medical treatment.

The church leader remained in custody until Oct. 22. He refused to renounce his faith and was charged with apostasy under article 126 of Sudan's Criminal Code. He has been released on bail but is required to report periodically to NISS.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are alarmed by the arrest and torture of Christians in Darfur. The men, who were peacefully gathered in a private place and posed no threat to the state, were subjected to serious mistreatment and forced to renounce their faith. We call for the charges against the men to be dropped immediately and without condition. This case stands out as a particularly serious and calculated violation of individual rights, and highlights the National Intelligence and Security Service's habitual use of torture."

The case raises concerns over the protection of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for Christians and other religious minorities in Darfur. Since 2011, the majority of FoRB violations have been most frequently reported in the cities of Khartoum, Omdurman, and Port Sudan, and in South Kordofan in particular. Human rights violations continue to be committed in Darfur, however until recently these were largely related to conflict and instability rather than the specific targeting of Christians. These developments occur at a time where there are significant shifts in the international presence in parts of Darfur as the African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur peacekeeping mission mandated by the UN Security Council to bring stability to the war-torn region begins its draw down and hands over key operational posts to the government of Sudan.

Thomas said, "We continue to call on the government of Sudan, which bears ultimate responsibility to ensure that Sudanese citizens are able to enjoy their constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of religion or belief and freedom from torture. This is particularly vital in areas of post conflict transition such as Darfur. We urge the international community, in particular the US, UK, EU and African Union to press the government of Sudan to comply with its international human rights obligations and to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment."