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Situation of two Christian pastors in Sudan

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

Tabled by Maria Heubuch, Heidi Hautala, Bart Staes, Barbara Lochbihler, Ernest Urtasun, Bodil Valero, Igor Šoltes, Ignazio Corrao, Fabio Massimo Castaldo on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Sudan,
- having regard to the Universal declaration on Human Rights,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- having regard to the 2000 Cotonou agreement
- having regard to UNGA resolution 69/175 on freedom of religion and belief,
- having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas Rev Yat Michael and Rev Peter Reith are pastors from the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church,

B. Whereas Pastor Michael was arrested on December 14, 2014, after a church service during which he had condemned the sale of church land in Khartoum and had expressed concern about the treatment of Christians in Sudan,

C. Whereas Pastor Peter Reith was arrested on January 11, 2015, after inquiring about Pastor Micheal in a letter he sent to the Religious Affairs Office in Khartoum,

D. Whereas Rev Yat Michael and Rev Peter Reith have been detained secretly and on unknown charges,

E. Whereas they are denied regular visits from their family and their lawyers,

F. Whereas the pastors have been charged jointly with acts of criminal conspiracy (Article 21 of the Sudanese Penal Code); undermining the constitutional system (Article 50); espionage (Article 53); disclosure and receipt of official information or documents (Article 55); promoting hatred amongst sects (Article 64); breach of public peace (Article 69); and offences relating to insulting religious beliefs (Article 125),

G. Whereas the charges based on Articles 50 and 53 of the Sudanese Penal code carry the death penalty or life imprisonment in the event of a guilty verdict,

H. Whereas their arrest is not an isolated case as many pastors from their Church have been imprisoned in Sudan, which is evidence of a systematic oppression of this Church by the Sudanese authorities,

I. Whereas on 25 May, two Sudanese Armed forces' fighter jets dropped three bombs on the town of Kauda in the Nuba Mountains killing a four year-old girl, and two bombs over the Catholic Church, school and priest's compounds,

J. Whereas freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right that needs to be protected everywhere and for everyone; whereas Sudan has ratified the relevant UN and African Union conventions and thereby has an international obligation to defend and promote freedom of religion or belief, which notably includes the right to adopt, change or abandon one's religion or belief of one's own free will,

K. Whereas the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, ratified by the Republic of Sudan, includes the right to life and the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment, but whereas the death penalty, flogging, amputation and other corporal punishments are still being carried out in the country for a number of criminal sentences,

L. Whereas the Sudanese Constitution states that "the State shall respect the religious rights to worship or assemble in connection with any religion or belief and to establish and maintain places for these purposes",

M. Whereas Sudan has signed but not ratified the 2005 revised version of the Cotonou agreement;

N. Whereas the non-ratification was essentially motivated by the fact that the 2005 revised version of the Cotonou agreement contains clauses about cooperation with the International Criminal Court;

O. Whereas the Republic of Sudan is therefore bound by the human rights clause of the Cotonou Agreement and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

P. Whereas the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva discussed Sudan at its 27th session in September 2014 and agreed to extend and strengthen the mandate for the independent expert under Item 10 (Technical assistance and capacity building),

1. Condemns the unjustified detention of Pastors Yat Michael and Peter Reith and calls for their immediate release;

2. Calls for the revocation of the extreme and unwarranted charges against them;

3. Urges the prison authorities to allow regular family and lawyer visits;

4. Is concerned by the ongoing campaign in Sudan against religious minorities and calls for its immediate stop;

5. Condemns the ongoing military campaign against the Nuba mountains' region, home to many Sudanese

Christians,

6. Recalls that Sudan has signed and ratified several international instruments which forbid prosecution and discrimination on religious grounds, arbitrary detention and absence of access to a legal counsel;
7. Recalls that discrimination and prosecution on religious grounds also constitute a violation of the Sudanese Constitution;
8. Calls on the Sudanese government to bring its national legislation into conformity with international human rights' standards when it comes to freedom of religion and belief;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Vice President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Government of Sudan, the African Union, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Pan African Parliament.

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