



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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June 18, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. State Department
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write to share with you the concerns of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) regarding the situation surrounding Ms. Mariam Yahya Ibrahim. The SCC, which includes the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference, points out that the court decision finding her guilty of apostasy and sentencing her to death violated Sudanese law and the International Convention on Human Rights, the latter of which Sudan has signed and ratified.

We join the SCC in rejecting the apostasy verdict and support their calls to abolish the court decision and release Ms. Ibrahim immediately. Like the SCC, we believe that the decision is a "clear and direct persecution of Christians and Sudanese Churches." The SCC noted the many cultural, ethnic and religious communities, including Christians, which make up Sudan's social fabric. The SCC urges Sudanese citizens to reinforce peaceful coexistence, to reject threats to social cohesion, and to support the President's call for a dialogue that "fosters the spirit of patriotism" among all Sudanese, regardless of their religion.

USCCB has worked for peace and justice in Sudan and South Sudan over the years. Given our long-term engagement in the region, we strongly support this call for peace, religious freedom and dialogue, especially in light of the fact that the country is embroiled in conflicts in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States. We ask the U.S. Government to urge the Government of Sudan to overturn the court decision against Ms. Ibrahim. At the same time, the Administration should pressure the Sudanese government to call for the immediate cessation of all armed conflicts and to devote its resources to promote the common good of its entire people.

Thank you for the Administration's work on these issues. I want to reassure you of our support for human rights and peace in Sudan.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace