



European Parliament Intergroup on

FoRB & RT

Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance

Strasbourg, 9th June 2015

Dear Mr Gonzato,

CC: Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Sudan Mr Tomas Ulicny

CC: Mr Bolvin

We are writing to you to express our concern about the detention of Pastor Michael Yat and Pastor Peter Yen Reith in Khartoum, Sudan.

Both pastors are currently in detention and are being prosecuted on charges that carry flogging and the death penalty. Amnesty International and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Middle East Concern have taken up the cases of the two pastors.

According to information we have received, the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) detained Pastor Michael Yat in Khartoum, on 14th December, 2014 at the end of a church service where he had preached. Pastor Yat is an ordained minister in the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC).

On 11th January of this year, the NISS in Khartoum detained a second South Sudanese pastor from the same denomination (the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church): Pastor Peter Yen Reith. He was detained right after he returned from a prayer meeting in Khartoum.

Both pastors were held incommunicado until the end of February. Since then their relatives and lawyer have visited them. They are being detained and have been charged by the Prosecutor for State Security with multiple offenses under Sudan's *Criminal Act 1991*, including undermining the constitutional system (Article 50), waging war against the State (51), espionage (53) which carry the death penalty, and blasphemy (125) which may be punishable by whipping.

We are raising the issue because their case will be heard on 15th June, when the NISS, who brought the case against the two pastors, will address the court and answer questions. According to Amnesty International the Sudanese Parliament amended its constitution in January to extend NISS' mandate to perform duties currently carried out by the armed forces and law enforcement agencies. The amendment also exempts the agency from international, regional and domestic law.

We ask the High Representative/Vice-President to directly appeal to the Sudanese government to release Pastors Yat and Reith and also for the European Union Delegation to Sudan to monitor court proceedings and provide assistance to the pastors.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis de Jong

Peter van Dalen