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# Pressure mounts on Sudan to pardon teen bride for killing 'rapist' husband

By Nita Bhalla

Thomas Reuters Foundation (14.05.2018) - <https://reut.rs/2IDa2WU> - The United Nations and international rights groups have called on Sudan to pardon a 19-year-old girl sentenced to death after she killed her husband as he tried to rape her, saying that she is a victim of child marriage and acted in self-defense.

Noura Hussein is facing death by hanging after a Sharia court, which follows Islamic religious laws, found her guilty of premeditated murder for stabbing her husband as he raped her in April. On Thursday, the court sentenced her to death.

The UN Women, UN Population Fund and UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa on Sunday appealed to President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's government for clemency for Hussein.

"Reports indicate that she was forced against her will into marriage at the age of 16. She was raped by her husband while his three male relatives held her down," said a joint statement.

"Speaking as the voices of women and girls of the world, we plead with the government of Sudan to save the life of Hussein."

Noura Hussein said her father made her contractually marry her cousin when she was 16, but she refused to accept and sought refuge with a relative for three years.

She returned to her family home on the outskirts of the capital Khartoum in April this year after her father said the marriage was canceled, but found that she had been duped and preparations for her wedding ceremony were under way.

Hussein said she refused to have sex with her husband after the ceremony, but on the sixth day, he raped her as three of his male relatives restrained her.

The following day, he attempted to rape her again and as she struggled to stop him, she stabbed him, killing him.

Campaigners said Hussein sought help from her family, but fearing reprisals from her dead husband's relatives, her father handed her over to the police.

Hussein's lawyers said they are preparing to appeal against the court's decision and have until May 25 to do so.

The case has attracted international attention. Social media users on Twitter and Facebook are sharing her story under the hashtag #JusticeForNoura, and a petition on change.org has attracted almost 300,000 signatures.

Amnesty International has started a campaign asking people to appeal to Sudan's Minister of Justice Idris Ibrahim Jamil.

"The courts are saying Noura is guilty of premeditated murder - even though she was defending herself from being raped by a man she was forced to marry when she was just a young teenager," said Amnesty International in a statement.

Sudan is ranked 165 out of 188 countries on the U.N.'s Gender Inequality Index, which measures how women fare compared to men when it comes to access to health, education, political participation and employment opportunities.

UN Women says violence against women and girls is prevalent in Sudan. Marital rape and child marriage are not considered crimes in the predominately Muslim African nation.

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