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Authorities in Sudan Demolish Church Building in Khartoum

No notice given before bulldozers arrive two hours after service

Morning Star News (12.02.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2FikqqV> - Authorities in Sudan yesterday demolished a church building in North Khartoum, sources said.

The 64 members of the Evangelical Church in Al Haj Yousif in the Sudanese capital will have no place to worship next Sunday after land officials sent a bulldozer accompanied by police to tear down their building without prior notice, according to one of the church's leaders. Police on three trucks arrived at the church compound accompanied by a bulldozer just a few hours after the end of Sunday worship, the leader said.

"They took everything from the church," she said.

Officials told church leaders that the church was demolished because worship created public disturbances, but Christian leaders said the church sat on land that the government is helping a Muslim business interest to seize.

Leaders of the Evangelical Church in Al Haj Yousif said the Muslim who claims ownership of the church property has forged documents showing ownership. They said the church has owned the property since 1989, and that a judge last year verbally confirmed its ownership.

With police at the ready in case of potential confrontations, the bulldozer began demolishing the structure by noon. Eyewitnesses said police confiscated chairs, tables and Bibles before the demolition.

One Christian called for rights organizations to pressure the Sudanese government to return the confiscated items.

"We urge all activists and human rights supporters around the world to denounce this move and demand for the return of the confiscated property of the church," Christian activist Samaan Mahajoub wrote on his Facebook page on Sunday (Feb. 11).

A court dispute about ownership of the church site is still pending in court.

The Rev. Yahia Abdelrahim Nalu of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) confirmed the demolition.

"These crazy actions will not stop us from praying and praising God!" he told Morning Star News. "God is Almighty."

The incident has attracted widespread outrage among Christians in Sudan, with many saying it directly shows hatred of Christians.

In its campaign to rid the country of Christianity, Sudan has designated at least 25 church buildings for destruction, claiming they were built on government lands, Christian leaders said.

On Feb. 5 a court fined seven Christians for defending church properties.

Harassment, arrests and persecution of Christians have intensified since the secession of South Sudan in July 2011. The Sudanese Minister of Guidance and Endowments announced in April 2013 that no new licenses would be granted for building new churches in Sudan, citing a decrease in the South Sudanese population.

Sudan since 2012 has expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed church buildings on the pretext that they belonged to South Sudanese. Besides raiding Christian bookstores and arresting Christians, authorities threatened to kill South Sudanese Christians who do not leave or cooperate with them in their effort to find other Christians.

Sudan fought a civil war with the south Sudanese from 1983 to 2005, and in June 2011, shortly before the secession of South Sudan the following month, the government began fighting a rebel group in the Nuba Mountains that has its roots in South Sudan.

Due to its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations, Sudan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999, and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended the country remain on the list in its 2017 report.

Sudan ranked fourth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of countries where Christians face most persecution.

Court in Sudan Fines Christian Leaders for Defending Church Property

Government helping Muslim business interest take over school, sources say

Morning Star News (06.02.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2Ek6ruO> - A court in Sudan has fined seven church leaders fighting a takeover of their school in Omdurman for "objection to authorities," a church leader said.

The court yesterday (Feb. 5) found Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) elder Yohanna Tia guilty under articles 182/183 for objection to authorities and fined him 5,000 Sudanese Pounds (US\$275), the Rev. Yahia Abdelrahim Nalu told Morning Star News.

Tia was one of 26 church leaders who have appeared in court since last week for defending a Muslim business interest's attempt to illegally seize the Evangelical School of Omdurman, Nalu said. Seven of the church leaders were ordered to pay fines of 2,500 Sudanese pounds (US\$137) each, and the other 19 were freed for lack of evidence, he said.

Two pastors – the Rev. Dawoud Fadul, SPEC moderator, and the Rev. Edris Kartina – were also fined 2,500 each. Church elders Adam George, Bolus Tutu and one identified only as Azhari, were also fined, along with school director Ustaz Dauod Musa Namnam.

Omdurman is located across the Nile River from Khartoum.

Church leaders have refused to hand over church lands and estates to Muslim businessman Hisham Hamad Al-Neel, sources said. In what Christians in Sudan believe is a campaign to take over church properties, a judge ruled on Dec. 3 that Al-Neel should take over the houses of Nalu and the Rev. Sidiq Abdalla. Al-Neel is attempting to take over SPEC properties in Khartoum and Khartoum Bahri (Khartoum North).

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Sudanese church leaders back in court



Sudan's government has confiscated or sold off several properties belonging to the Sudanese Church of Christ and Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (World Watch Monitor)

World Watch Monitor (07.02.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2BL9gmO> - There have been new developments in [two ongoing court cases](#) against Sudan's two main church denominations.

On 5 February, a court fined seven leaders from the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) for their “objection to the authorities”.

Yohanna Tia, a church elder, was fined 5,000 Sudanese Pounds (\$275). Rev. Dawoud Fadul, the SPEC’s moderator, and Rev. Edris Kartina were each fined 2,500 Sudanese pounds (\$138). Three more Christians were also fined, along with school director Ustaz Dauod Musa Namnam. Nineteen others were freed due to a lack of evidence.

The problems for the SPEC began in 2012, when the Evangelical Community Council, a SPEC committee responsible for managing the denomination’s properties, appointed Rafat Samir as chair to replace Hamad Muhammad Salah, who was dismissed over fraud. But Salah then complained to the government, who reinstated him, even though they did not have the legal authority to appoint someone to a church committee.

Since his reinstatement, Salah has been selling church property to businessmen aligned with the government, against the wishes of the church. On several occasions church members have been detained or physically assaulted, as they peacefully protested against these sales.

This government-appointed committee has been illegally selling SPEC properties in Khartoum, Bahri (Khartoum North), Port Sudan, Kosti, Kadugli, Atbara and other towns in Sudan, according to advocacy group [Middle East Concern](#). There are numerous ongoing court cases about these properties.

SCOC also under pressure



SCOC’s leaders have been taken to court for having church services that are “too noisy” (World Watch Monitor)

In the second ongoing case, five church leaders from the Sudanese Church of Christ appeared in court again on Monday 5 February to hear the complaints against them. The five men – Ayouba Telyan, Abdelbagi Tutu, Ali El Hakim, Ambarator Hamad and Haibil Ibrahim – were first [arrested last October](#).

During their detention officers ordered them to hand over ownership of the church from the elected committee to a state-sanctioned rival committee. Despite their refusal, officers released the men without further instruction.

But a few days later they were charged with causing sound pollution because their [churches were "too noisy"](#).

Their latest court hearing was adjourned until 6 March.
