

# Sudanese authorities detain shipment of Arabic Bibles without explanation

By Jardine Malado

The Christian Times (23.10.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2h3yQrp> – Port authorities in Sudan have detained a shipment of Arabic Bibles for two years without providing an explanation, according to a representative of a Bible society.

The representative, who wished to remain anonymous, told Morning Star News that a shipment of Arabic Bibles that was headed for Sudan's capital of Khartoum has been detained by authorities in Port Sudan for more than two years.

Due to the delay in the release of the shipment, the Bible Society in Sudan still does not have a single copy of an Arabic Bible available in Khartoum, the source said.

Another container with Arabic Bibles was also withheld, but it was released shortly after appeals to port authorities.

The source further noted that other shipments of Bibles have been detained at Port Sudan, on the Red Sea, over the past two years.

Other international organizations that provide Bibles have also complained about the detainment of shipping containers full of Bibles. Most cases have been attributed to corruption, but some cases are believed to be attempts to keep the Judeo-Christian scripture out of the country.

The representative of the Bible society pointed out that the detainment of Bibles in Sudan also took place before 2011, with one shipment held up for almost four years.

Christian leaders have speculated that Sudan may be open to releasing the shipment after the U.S. government lifted the sanctions against the country on Oct. 12. Sanctions have been placed against Sudan since 1997 due to its terrorist ties and violations of human rights.

According to the representative, a port official has recently indicated willingness to consider releasing the shipment.

Following the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudanese authorities launched a crackdown on churches and Christian literature, on the pretext that most Christians have fled the country after the separation.

In 2013, the Sudanese Minister of Guidance and Endowments announced that it will no longer grant new licenses for the construction of new church buildings, citing a decrease in the South Sudanese population.

As many as 25 churches in Sudan have been designated for destruction earlier this year. On May 7, a church building, which began as a refugee camp for South Sudanese, was demolished in the Khartoum suburb of Soba al Aradi. On Aug. 2, a Baptist church in Omdurman was demolished by the authorities.

The government has maintained that the churches were built on land that was intended for residential or other use, or were on government land, but church leaders have suggested that it was part of a wider crackdown on Christianity.

Sudan has been designated by the U.S. State Department as a Country of Particular Concern since 1999, due to its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations.

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