

CZECH REPUBLIC/SUDAN: Czech man ready to resume African mission after Sudanese ordeal

Prague Daily Monitor (06.03.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2mRgK0v> – Petr Jasek, who spent 14.5 months on espionage charges in prisons in Sudan and was released to the Czech Republic in February, will return to Africa even after the bitter experience, Jasek told journalists after meeting the Brethren Church members yesterday.

Jasek was sentenced to 20 years in prison in Sudan in late January.

In February, Foreign Minister Lubomir Zaoralek negotiated about his release in Khartoum. Sudanese President Omar Bashir then granted pardon to Jasek and ordered his immediate release.

The Sudanese authorities accused Jasek of activities against the state, including espionage. Prague says he was arrested in 2015, during his missionary expedition aimed to help local Christians.

Czech diplomacy considers Jasek's arrest unfounded.

EU bodies, which repeatedly criticise human rights violation and violence against minorities in Sudan, also intervened in Jasek's case in support of his release. A petition for his release has been signed by 400,000 people, according to the CitizenGO group.

Jasek, together with three African people, was charged on seven counts in Sudan.

Jasek said he might travel to Nigeria where Christians were persecuted, tortured and killed every day.

"I will be certainly travelling to Africa since I am in charge of it in our organisation," Jasek said.

"It is more or less a matter of time when I will return there," he added.

"For a time, I will have a holiday for my convalescence, but I will keep contact with my fellow workers. I am looking forward to the work," Jasek said.

Jasek said he doubted his release was due to the presidential pardon.

"I doubt that the president signed anything," Jasek said, adding that everything was taking place under the guidance of the secret service in Sudan.

Jasek said the worst situation in Africa was in northern Nigeria.

"This will be certainly the destination of my first journey," he added.

When asked whether he would return to Sudan after his ordeal, he said if necessary he certainly would.

"However, since I was officially expelled from the country, as it was at least presented to me, I doubt I would be granted the visas again," Jasek said.

Jasek was forced to stay in five Sudanese prisons.

He was beaten by his fellow prisoners some of whom were Islamists. One of them was a bodyguard of Osama bin Laden.

He was also kept in a solitary confinement dubbed "a fridge" where prison guards let out cold air on him intentionally.

One of the worst experiences was staying in a a small police cell with dozens of other prisoners, he added. He complained about sanitary conditions.

“Some 100 people used one toilet without water. Such conditions are hard for a man to stand,” he said.

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