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Sudan teen who killed rapist husband faces new calls for death penalty

Noura Hussein got a jail sentence after an international outcry. Prosecutors seek to overturn the ruling that spared her execution.

By Zeinab Mohammed Salih

The Guardian (24.08.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2w40Z9l> - State prosecutors in Sudan are calling for the death penalty to be reinstated for a young woman who was sentenced to five years in jail for killing her abusive husband.

Noura Hussein, 19, was found guilty of premeditated murder in May and had faced execution. But a month later, after a high profile campaign, the verdict was quashed and she was given a jail sentence and fined for manslaughter.

However, it has emerged that prosecutors are seeking to overturn the latest ruling and reinstate the death penalty.

Hussein was forced to marry at 16. She fled the marriage, but was tricked into returning to her husband by family members. She stabbed him as he tried to rape her.

Judy Gitau, a human rights lawyer at Equality Now, which is campaigning on Hussein's behalf, said the development was extremely concerning. "We reiterate our calls to the Sudanese authorities to ensure that the rule of law is observed," said Gitau. "The Sudanese government took a positive step forward for women's and girls' rights by overturning Noura's death sentence. There should be no regression on this."

Equality Now is asking Hussein's supporters to send letters of concern to Sudan's attorney general, Omer Ahmed Mohamed, the justice minister Dr Idris Ibrahim Jameel, and the National Commission for Human Rights of Sudan.

Asked how she was coping in prison, Hussein told the Guardian she had applied to study law at university. Her lawyers said she had been offered a scholarship to study at the Open University of Sudan.

Sudan allows girls as young as 10 to be married. More than a third of girls in Sudan are married before 18 according to the UN, and 12% are wed before they reach 15.

Since the case, Hussein's family have been forced to leave their home in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, fearing reprisals from the dead man's family.

His father told al-Tayyar daily newspaper in Khartoum that the family were not going to forgive Hussein. He added that even if she were executed they would still seek revenge

because Hussein was only a woman who had killed a man, and women were not equal to men.

The No to Women's Oppression group is mediating between the two families.

Hussein's lawyer said he did not know when a decision on this latest appeal would be made.

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.
