



Sudan: Pressure Mounting On Mariam to Convert to Islam

Exactly a month after she was sentenced to death, the Archdiocese of Khartoum, north Sudan, issued a statement describing her current predicament.

“There are many people trying to persuade Mariam to renounce Christianity in order to be freed but she is refusing. Some people are pleading with her husband to convince her to abandon her Christian faith in order to save her life but to no avail.”

The statement issued June 11 from Fr Mussa Kacho, Episcopal vicar of Khartoum region, aimed to correct media inaccuracies and “pleaded” with authorities to resolve the case. Describing the present situation, Fr Kacho said: “Mrs Mariam is still in Omdurman prison, practically on death row, breast feeding her child in chains. Her case is currently in the court of appeal. No one knows when the appeal court will decide on it.

“According to the concerned authorities, Mrs Mariam can only be released on the condition that she renounces Christianity and gets divorced from her husband ‘Daniel’ to embrace Islam and gets divorced from the husband.

“The only way to save their marriage, supposing that Mariam abandons her Christian faith, is for the husband ‘Daniel’ to embrace Islam and be remarried according to Islamic religion.”

The couple was married in the Catholic Church on December 19, 2011. Her husband, Daniel Bicensio Wani, is a life-long Catholic and Ms Ibrahim converted from Ethiopian Orthodox to Catholic shortly before her marriage.

Although her father was a Muslim, she was baptized and raised in her mother’s Orthodox Faith.

The statement from the Archdiocese of Khartoum stressed: “Never in her life did she embrace the Islamic religion nor renounce it. She has never been a Muslim in her life.”

It also drew attention to the fact that the 2005 interim constitution of Sudan guarantees freedom of religion: “No person shall be coerced to adopt such faith, that he/she does not believe in nor to practice rites or services to which he/she does not voluntarily consent.”

The Church statement concluded: “Therefore, in light of the facts that we have provided above, and to honour Mariam’s steadfast position to maintain her Christian faith, we are pleading with the Judiciary and other concerned authorities to review the case against Mrs Mariam and to bring it to a reasonable end.”