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REDRESS and partner organisations appeal to Africa’s main human rights body on behalf of Meriam Ibrahim – a woman sentenced to death in Sudan for her religion

London, 2 June 2014 – REDRESS and five other organisations have lodged today a complaint against Sudan with Africa’s main human rights body, urging it to request Sudan to immediately release from prison Meriam Ibrahim and her two children, and to suspend a sentence of death and corporal punishment of 100 lashes for apostasy and adultery, which a Sudanese court imposed in May.

In a complaint to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the organisations say that Sudan has violated several fundamental rights of Mrs Ibrahim recognised by the African Charter, which Sudan accepted in 1986, including freedom of religion and freedom from torture. The four organisations that signed the complaint together with REDRESS are:

- the African Centre of Justice and Peace Studies (ACJS)
- the Sudanese Organisation for Development and Rehabilitation (SODR)
- the Sudanese Human Rights Initiative (SHRI) and
- the Justice Center for Advocacy and Legal Consulting (JCALC)

Mrs Ibrahim was convicted on 11 May of apostasy and adultery, after her marriage to a Christian was declared void. The Court considered her to be a Muslim, because this is the religion of her father. Under Shari’a law she was thus prohibited from changing her religion.

Mrs Ibrahim is currently being held in the Omdurman women’s prison in Khartoum, the capital, with her 20-month old son and baby daughter, whom she gave birth to while in detention on 27 May. The prison is notoriously overcrowded and the medical care provided is insufficient, resulting in appalling conditions to inmates. Her situation is aggravated by the fact that she is routinely shackled, which makes it very difficult for her to look after her children.

“It is outrageous that Meriam is facing the death penalty and one hundred lashes for exercising her basic human rights,” said Carla Ferstman, Director of REDRESS. *“Sudan must abide by its international legal obligations and release her and her children immediately.”*

Mrs Ibrahim’s lawyers have appealed the sentence and are awaiting a decision. The organisations that have filed the complaint are concerned that if the appeal is denied, the 100 lashes could be implemented immediately once the judgment becomes final. For this reason, in their complaint, they urge the African Commission to adopt urgent measures to ensure that no irreparable harm is done to Meriam, including to request Sudan to immediately release Meriam and her children from prison, and to suspend her death sentence and sentence of corporal punishment.

Mrs Ibrahim's case also highlights the pervasive discrimination against women in Sudan, which also results in a discriminatory application of the law. As far back as 2003, the African Commission already found that Sudan's flogging of students for wearing "indecent dress" was wrong. It held that "there is no right for individuals, and particularly the government of a country to apply physical violence to individuals for offences. Such a right would be tantamount to sanctioning State sponsored torture under the Charter and contrary to the very nature of this human rights treaty."

REDRESS and ACJPS have also brought the case of Safia Ishaq Mohammed Issa before the African Commission. Mrs Issa is a Sudanese student who says she was kidnapped, beaten and gang-raped by state agents in 2011 after participating in pro-democracy youth rallies. The Commission [declared her complaint against Sudan admissible](#) on 29 May 2014.

For more information on biases against women in the Sudanese legal system, see:

- REDRESS and the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor, *No more cracking of the whip: Time to end corporal punishment in Sudan* (2012) available here: <http://www.redress.org/downloads/publications/Corporal%20Punishment%20-%20English.pdf>
- REDRESS and the Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development, *Time for Change: Reforming Sudan's Legislation on Rape and Sexual Violence* (2008) available here: <http://www.redress.org/downloads/publications/Position%20Paper%20Rape.pdf>
- All of REDRESS' Sudan publications are accessible here: <http://www.redress.org/africa/sudan>

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About REDRESS: REDRESS has been helping torture survivors obtain justice and reparation since 1992. It works in partnership with like-minded organisations around the world to end impunity and eradicate the practice of torture worldwide. REDRESS has intervened in a range of leading torture cases in the UK and abroad. More information about our work is available on www.redress.org and on our Project for Criminal Law Reform website <http://www.redress.org/country-work/criminal-law-reform-sudan>.