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Brussels, **27 JUN 2014**
A(2014)1581179-1676800-
1879137-1734676

Mr Peter Van Dalen MEP
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European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Brussels

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your recent messages and letters concerning the case of Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, the Sudanese woman sentenced to death and flogging in Sudan for the alleged crimes of apostasy and adultery.

I am equally dismayed by the sentencing and continued arrest of Meriam Ibrahim. Freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right that needs to be protected everywhere and for everyone. Sudan has ratified the relevant UN and African Union conventions and thereby has an international obligation to defend and promote the freedom of religion or belief, which notably includes the right to adopt, change or abandon one's religion or belief of one's own free will.

We have publicly expressed our concerns first in a press statement in Khartoum on 14 May, then in a statement by my spokesperson on 15 May. On 23 May, we have summoned the Sudanese ambassador accredited to the EU, and we are aware that many Member States have taken similar action. We keep closely observing the case and, to the extent possible, assessing carefully and regularly her prison conditions. EU Delegations in Khartoum and elsewhere raise the issue systematically with all relevant interlocutors, and we fully support ongoing efforts led by the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator on the request of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to get Meriam Ibrahim released.

We understand that the legal appeals under Sudanese and international law are not yet exhausted and we hope for a release of Meriam Ibrahim in the near future. We are calling on the responsible Sudanese authorities and appeal courts to proceed with the review of her verdict with the utmost urgency, taking humanitarian aspects into consideration.

Rest assured that we – the EU and Member States – are looking into all possibilities and do our utmost to campaign in the most effective way for a speedy revision of the verdict of Meriam Ibrahim, the repealing of all legal provisions in Sudan that penalise or discriminate individuals for leaving or changing their religion or belief, and the abolishment of the death penalty in more general terms.

Sincerely

Catherine Ashton
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