

Question for written answer E-011198/2015
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Bas Belder (ECR)

Subject: VP/HR - Situation of two Christian pastors in Sudan

On 14 December 2014 the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) in Sudan detained Pastor Michael Yat in Khartoum, at the end of a church service at which he had preached. The church in question, the Bahri Evangelical Church, has itself faced significant harassment from the authorities. On 11 January 2015 the NISS detained a second South Sudanese pastor, Peter Yen Reith. He was detained immediately after he returned from a prayer meeting in Khartoum. On 4 May a procedural hearing was held, at which they were charged under 8 articles of Sudan's Criminal Act for such offences as undermining the constitutional system, waging war against the State and espionage, which are crimes against the State, even punishable by the death penalty.

Since early June 2015, the prison authorities at Kober Prison have denied these men access to their legal counsel to prepare an adequate defence. During the trial, the government presented scant evidence that these pastors had committed the alleged crimes And yet the judge has allowed the case to proceed.

What action will the EU take to assist these pastors and ensure that they are given a fair trial?

What action is the EU taking to protect religious rights and freedoms in Sudan, including action to stop the harassment of churches?