

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 453

Condemning the death sentence against Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag, a Sudanese Christian woman accused of apostasy.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 21, 2014

Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. COONS, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. INHOFE, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. VITTER, Mr. MORAN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. BURR, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. COBURN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Condemning the death sentence against Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag, a Sudanese Christian woman accused of apostasy.

Whereas, on May 15, 2014, a Sudanese court affirmed a sentence of death by hanging for 27-year-old Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag, a Christian woman accused of apostasy for refusing to recant her Christian faith, and ordered her to receive 100 lashes for adultery because under Sudan's Shari'ah law such inter-religious marriages are illegal;

Whereas Ibrahim is eight months pregnant and being held in the Omdurman Federal Women's Prison with her 20-month-old son;

Whereas the Department of State has designated Sudan as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–292) based on the government's systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom since 1999;

Whereas the Sudanese 1991 Criminal Code allows for death sentences for apostasy, stoning for adultery, cross-amputations for theft, prison sentences for blasphemy, and floggings for undefined acts of "indecent";

Whereas, according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the Government of Sudan, led by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, continues to engage in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom or belief, imposes a restrictive interpretation of Shari'ah law on Muslims and non-Muslims alike and, along with other National Congress Party leaders, President al-Bashir has stated that Sudan's new constitution, when drafted, will be based on its interpretation of Shari'ah;

Whereas, according to USCIRF, since South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011, the number and severity of harsh Shari'ah-based judicial decisions in Sudan has increased, including sentences of amputation for theft and sentences of stoning for adultery;

Whereas the United States Government has designated Sudan as a State Sponsor of Terrorism since August 12, 1993, for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism;

Whereas the Sudanese 2005 Interim Constitution states that “[t]he State shall respect the religious rights to (a) worship or assemble in connection with any religion or belief”;

Whereas the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the Government of Sudan has acceded, provides that “everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching.”;

Whereas the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life found that, as of 2011, 10 percent of the 198 countries surveyed had apostasy laws which can, and have been, used to punish both Muslims and non-Muslims in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, and Sudan; and

Whereas people have the right to practice their faith without fear of death or persecution: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) condemns the charge of apostasy and death
3 sentence of Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag and calls
4 for immediate and unconditional release of her and
5 her son;

6 (2) encourages efforts by the United States
7 Government to support religious freedom within
8 Sudan, including by requiring, before normalizing

1 relations or lifting sanctions under the International
2 Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–
3 292) and the International Emergency Economic
4 Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.), that the Gov-
5 ernment of Sudan abide by international standards
6 of freedom of religion or belief;

7 (3) urges the Government of Sudan to ensure
8 that, when drafting the country’s new constitution,
9 the process is transparent and inclusive of civil soci-
10 ety leaders and representatives of all major political
11 parties, to ensure that the new constitution includes
12 protections for freedom of religion or belief, respect
13 for international human rights commitments, and
14 recognition of Sudan as a multireligious, multi-
15 ethnic, and multicultural nation;

16 (4) recognizes that every individual regardless
17 of religion should have the opportunity to practice
18 his or her religion without fear of discrimination;

19 (5) reaffirms the commitment of the United
20 States Government to end religious discrimination
21 and to pursue policies that guarantee the basic
22 human rights of all individuals worldwide; and

23 (6) encourages the Department of State and
24 the United States Agency for International Develop-

- 1 ment to continue their support for initiatives world-
- 2 wide that support religious freedom.

