**Pregnant Sudanese woman faces death by hanging for refusing to recant Christianity**

A judge in Khartoum convicted 26-year-old Meriam Ibrahim of apostasy for practicing Christianity and marrying a Christian man. According to the country’s laws, children must follow their father’s faith—and Ibrahim’s dad was a Muslim.

By Carol Kuruvilla

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A pregnant woman is facing the gallows for her faith.

Meriam Ibrahim, a 26-year-old Sudanese woman who is the daughter of a Muslim father and an Orthodox Christian mother, was sentenced to death on Thursday for refusing to deny that she was Christian.

Judge Abbas Khalifa convicted Ibrahim of “apostasy”—abandoning her faith—on Sunday, but gave her until Thursday to change her mind. When the grace period expired, he handed down the chilling penalty of death by hanging.

"We gave you three days to recant but you insist on not returning to Islam. I sentence you to be hanged to death," the judge told the woman, according to Al Jazeera.

As in several conservative Muslim countries, apostasy is a crime in Sudan. The country's Shariah laws require children to follow their father’s religion. Muslim women in Sudan are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims, although men are allowed to married outside their faith.

Ibrahim says she was raised as a Christian by her Ethiopian mother after her Muslim dad abandoned the family. She married a Christian man, Daniel Wani, who her lawyers say has U.S. citizenship.

Her paternal relatives began complaining to the authorities in August about the relationship. The family claimed she was born “Adraf Al-Hadi Mohammed Abdullah” and had changed her name.

In court, the woman refused to acknowledge the judge when he called her by the Muslim name.

"I am a Christian and I never committed apostasy," she said from a caged dock during her trial, the BBC reports.

A number of apostasy cases have been brought up in Sudanese courts over the years. But so far, the accused have escaped the death penalty by recanting their faith.

The judge had previously sentenced Ibrahim to 100 lashes as a punishment for adultery—since her marriage was forbidden under Islamic law.

Local media reported that the harsh sentences wouldn’t be carried out until the woman gives birth. She is eight months pregnant with her second child. Her son, 18-month-old Martin, is staying in prison with her.

Her lawyer Al-Shareef Ali al-Shareef Mohammed said that he will appeal the conviction.

"The judge has exceeded his mandate when he ruled that Meriam's marriage was void because her husband was out of her faith," Mohammed told The Associated Press. "He was thinking more of Islamic Shariah laws than of the country's laws and its constitution."

The case brought protesters and supporters of the verdict to the streets outside the courthouse in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum. The embassies of the U.S., U.K. Holland and Canada have decried the verdict. International human rights groups were also quick to condemn the judge’s actions.

"The fact that a woman has been sentenced to death for her religious choice, and to flogging for being married to a man of an allegedly different religion is appalling and abhorrent," said Amnesty International’s Sudan expert Manar Idriss. "It is flagrant breach of international human rights law."