



Sudan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 23 December 2009.

Treatment of Christians in Sudan.

A report by the *US Department of State* under the heading 'Freedom of Religion' states:

"In the south, Christians, Muslims, and followers of traditional indigenous beliefs generally worshiped freely. The GOSS officially favored secular government. Christians dominated the GOSS. Local government authorities often had a close relationship with local Christian religious leaders." (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Sudan*)

It also states under the heading 'Societal Abuses and Discrimination'

"Muslims in the north who express an interest in Christianity or convert to Christianity faced severe social pressure. Christians reported pressure on children in school; some teachers and media characterized non-Muslims as nonbelievers." (ibid)

A report by the *US Department of State* under the heading 'Religious Demography' states:

"Religion plays a prominent role in the complex system of political alliances. Northern Muslims have dominated the political and economic system since independence in 1956. Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, the GNU has appointed both Muslims and Christians to prominent executive positions." (US Department of State (26 October 2009) *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 Sudan*)

It also states under the heading 'Legal/Policy Framework'

"National government offices and businesses in the north follow the Islamic workweek, with Friday as a day of prayer. Employers are required by law to give their Christian employees two hours before 10 a.m. on Sunday for religious purposes. In practice, many employers did not comply, and there was no legal remedy. Public schools are in session on Sunday and Christian students are not excused from classes. Instead, most Christians worship on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday evening." (ibid)

It also states under the heading 'Restrictions on Religious Freedom'

"Many southern Christians living in the north are economic migrants and are subject to social, educational, and job discrimination." (ibid)

It also states under the heading 'Abuses of Religious Freedom'

“Religious tensions between Muslims and Christians in Southern Kordofan simmered in February 2009 when two local members of the NCP-aligned Popular Defense Force (PDF) threatened to kill a local Presbyterian church leader, according to the UN. On March 1, 2009, PDF members interrupted a church service and threatened further destruction after breaking the cross on the church's roof. On March 7, the Episcopal church in Shatt Mazarik was the target of an arson attack, and on March 21, there was a similar attack on the Catholic church in Shatt Dammam. Church leaders reported to the UN that Kadugli police took no action to investigate the crimes. On March 29, following fighting between the PDF and the SPLA, the Southern Kordofan State Legislative Council held a special session to address the mounting religious and ethnic tensions in the area.” (ibid)

A report by the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* under the heading ‘USCIRF Annual Report 2009 - Countries of Particular Concern: Sudan’ states:

“The government of Sudan commits egregious and systematic violations of freedom of religion or belief in the areas under its control, particularly against Christians, Muslims who do not follow the government's extreme interpretation of Islam, and followers of traditional African religions...”(United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (1 May 2009) *USCIRF Annual Report 2009 - Countries of Particular Concern: Sudan*)

It also states:

“During the North-South civil war (1983-2005), the Commission identified Sudan as the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion or belief. The Commission also has drawn attention to the Sudanese government's genocidal atrocities against civilian populations in other regions. Successive regimes in Khartoum have emphasized Sudan's identity as being Arab and Muslim, thus effectively relegating non-Arabs and non-Muslims to a secondary status in the society. Resistance to Khartoum's policies of Islamization and Arabization was a major factor in the North-South civil war. Northern leaders, including Sudan's current President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, used religion as a tool for popular mobilization against both non-Muslim Southerners and Muslims who opposed the regime's policies. The civilian victims of that conflict, two million dead and four million driven from their homes, were overwhelmingly Southern Christians and followers of traditional African religions, in contrast to the Arabic-speaking Muslims dominant in Khartoum.” (ibid)

It also states:

“In government-controlled areas of the North, the religious freedom and other human rights protections agreed to in the CPA and enshrined in Sudan's Interim National Constitution have not yet resulted in significant changes to the government's practice of enforcing its interpretation of Islam to the detriment of those holding other views. Muslims reportedly receive preferential access to limited government services and preferential treatment in court cases involving Muslims against non-Muslims. All Sudanese in the North, including Christians and followers of traditional African religions, are subject to sharia. Corporal punishments adopted from sharia are imposed on

both non-Muslims and on Muslims who do not traditionally follow such practices.” (ibid)

A report by the *Home Office UK Border Agency* under the heading ‘Torture’ states:

“Human Rights Today, noted on 15 July 2009, the flogging of Christian girls by the Sudanese police:

“International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that Sudanese officials flogged several Christian women for wearing pants [trousers]. The Sudanese public order police arrested the girls last week at a ballroom in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan.

“According to the Sudan Tribune, ten girls, including several Christians, each received 10 lashes and was fined 250 Sudanese pounds (\$179). Three of the Christian girls are under eighteen years of age. The police accused them of wearing ‘gross clothing’ in violation of the Criminal Penal Code of Sudan. The Sudanese penal code based on Islamic laws which discriminate against religious minorities and women.” (Home Office UK Border Agency (15 October 2009) *Country Of Origin Information Report Sudan* pg. 47 – 10.29)

It also states under the heading ‘Abuse And Restriction Of Religious Freedom’

“The USSD IRF report 2008 stated that:

“Although the Government generally did not vigorously enforce its strictest restrictions on religious freedom, it does not generally respect religious plurality in the north ... The Government favored Muslims over Christians in the north in part by funding the construction of mosques but not churches. Many southern Christians living in the north are economic migrants, and due to many factors, they suffer from social, educational, and job discrimination.” (ibid) (pg. 85 – 21.12)

A report by *Freedom House* under the heading ‘Freedom in the World - Sudan (2009)’ states:

“Religious freedom is guaranteed by the 2005 interim constitution. Islam was previously the state religion, and Sharia was regarded as the source of legislation. Sudan’s northern states, which are predominantly Sunni Muslim, are still subject to Sharia, unlike those in the south, which are predominantly Christian and animist. The Christian minority in the north faces discrimination and harassment, and permits to build churches there are sometimes denied. Under the 1994 Societies Registration Act, religious groups must register in order to legally assemble, and registration is reportedly difficult to obtain. The north-south conflict was characterized as jihad by the government, and in some cases non-Muslims were forced to convert to Islam.” (Freedom House (2009) *Freedom in the World - Sudan (2009)*)

References:

Freedom House (2009) *Freedom in the World - Sudan (2009)*

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2009&country=7708>

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Home Office UK Border Agency (15 October 2009) *Country Of Origin Information Report Sudan*

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html#countries

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United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (1 May 2009) *USCIRF Annual Report 2009 - Countries of Particular Concern: Sudan*

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

Amnesty International

BBC News

Electronic Immigration Network (EIN)

European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI)

Human Rights Watch

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

Lexis Nexis

UK Home Office

UNHCR Refworld

US Department of State