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**Press Release**

**South Sudan Pastors Released in the Sudan**

Religious freedom is enshrined in the Sudanese constitution. When Christian Solidarity International funded an Oxford conference (June 2013) on religious minorities, a Coptic Sudanese was invited.

To the disappointment of the organisers, he said categorically that he never experienced discrimination because of his faith.

In May last year a worldwide campaign was unleashed regarding the case of Mariam (Abrar) Ibrahim who was imprisoned in the Sudan following a religious dispute with her family. The government was not involved. She was seen by the campaigners as a persecuted Christian.

At that time, we at the Embassy responded to the torrent of protest letters explaining that it would be inappropriate to comment on a court case that was still being reviewed pending an appeal. Then a higher court overturned the verdict of the preliminary court and she was freed. She flew to Italy then the US (where the Ferguson/Missouri riots were raging!)

None of those who campaigned against the Sudan bothered to commend the independence and fairness of our judicial system.

In the last four weeks, we have again faced an escalating anti- Sudan campaign, involving embassies and the media in an attempt to influence the course of justice in the case of two South Sudanese pastors accused of espionage and inciting tribal discord. Again, the embassy refrained from commenting on a court case.

Yesterday 5th August 2015 both pastors were acquitted by a Sudanese judge. Their phones and other possessions were returned to them. As expected not a

single western media outlet or embassy spokesperson noted the independence and fairness of our judicial system.

Some were probably disappointed because a different verdict would have allowed them to continue demonising the Sudan.

The policy of unfair double standards vis a vis the Sudan is based on the presumption that everything that the Sudan does is unacceptable while everything the SPLA/N does in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile is fine. As the Sudan and AU expert Dr Alex deWaal (Tufts University- World Peace Foundation) said in a Washington post interview, many South Sudan advocates in the West, especially the lobbyists in Washington DC have allowed the SPLA "to develop a sense of impunity". "The current war in South Sudan ... is testament to this error".

Will those orchestrating the successive anti- Sudan campaigns learn their lesson?

**Media Office, Embassy of Sudan**

**6th August 2015**