

Sudan detains 10 women for what they wore to church

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(RNS) Sudanese authorities have detained 10 Christian students on a charge of indecent dressing, a criminal offense, after they wore miniskirts and trousers to church.

The young women were arrested last month in front of the Evangelical Baptist Church in the war-torn Nuba Mountains region in South Kordofan.

The girls, ages 17 to 23, had attended a ceremony at the church.

Police charged 12 women under Sudan's 1991 Criminal Act, but two were released. The rest are to appear in court in coming days. If convicted, each will face 40 lashes.

"Sudan must drop the charges and release these women immediately," Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International's East Africa Deputy Director said on Sunday. "A hemline is not a crime."

Jackson said authorities imposed the charges in a discriminatory and inappropriate way and violated the women's rights.

The 17-year-old student's case has been transferred to the juvenile court. The rest of the women have court dates this week.

The Sudanese government is now trying two Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church pastors. The pastors face a possible death penalty conviction on charges of spying.

Yat Michael Rout was arrested last December after he delivered a sermon in a church in Omdurman area, while Peter Yein Reith was arrested weeks later after he raised the arrest issue with Sudan authorities.

Islamic law is strictly imposed in Sudan, and its government has increased persecution of Christians.