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Sudan must save Darfuri activist from imminent execution

Sudanese authorities must halt the execution of a Darfuri activist whose sentence was changed from 10 years' imprisonment to death, Amnesty International urged today amid fears he will be hanged this weekend.

Bakri Moussa Mohammed, who has been involved in protests against the repression of displaced people by security forces in South Darfur, was jailed in 2010 for his alleged participation in a murder.

"We believe Bakri Moussa Mohammed is at imminent risk of being hanged and we implore the Sudanese authorities to act immediately to stop the execution, through whatever means available," said Netsanet Belay, Amnesty International's Africa director.

"The vague circumstances of the change in Bakri's sentence are a clear violation of fair trial standards."

Bakri Moussa Mohammed's family believe he was arrested and sentenced for murder in retaliation for his activism.

On 31 December 2012, almost three years after his imprisonment, he was told by an officer in Kober prison, Khartoum, that his punishment had been revised to a death sentence.

The same day, he was transferred to death row and reportedly brought to the gallows three times, before being told that the execution would be postponed for 35 days.

The deadline has now passed, and Amnesty International understands that a further grace period secured by Bakri's lawyer will expire in about 24 hours.

There appears to have been no court hearing about the change of sentence.

Bakri's family believe the decision was taken by the prison administration under the influence of the National Security Service.

"The Sudanese authorities have serious questions to answer about the revision of this sentence. Trials for crimes carrying the death penalty must comply with the most rigorous internationally recognized standards for fair trial," said Netsanet Belay.

"Those rules appear to have been flouted in the case of Bakri Moussa Mohammed, whom we fear is being persecuted solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and assembly."

Bakri Moussa Mohammed, an active government critic, was a community activist in the Kalma camp for displaced people in South Darfur. He was arrested in 2009 and sentenced in 2010 for murder, although he maintains his innocence.

International law prohibits any execution after a trial which does not meet international fair trial standards.

Any person sentenced to death also has the right to request a pardon or commutation of a death sentence.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty violates the right to life and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.