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Sudan releases prisoner of conscience

Sudanese teacher and activist Jalila Khamis Koko, who was arrested by the National Security Service in March 2012, was released from detention after a court hearing today.

Jalila was acquitted of all charges except those related to “spreading false news”, a vague provision of the criminal code often used by the government to silence dissent. It is punishable by six months in prison, but the court released her since she had already spent nine months in pre-trial detention.

“Jalila’s release is victory for justice but the nine months that she has spent in detention simply for expressing her opinions cannot be ignored,” said Audrey Gaughran, Amnesty International’s Africa program director.

“The Sudanese government must ensure that Jalila is compensated for being deprived of her freedom and separated from her family for so long. While she was held Jalila’s health deteriorated significantly.

“The government must also ensure that she is able to return to her teaching job from which she was unfairly dismissed during the course of her detention.”