

PICTURE EXCLUSIVE: Smiling with immense relief, the Sudanese mother sentenced to hang for 'converting to Christianity' hours after she was freed following international outcry

- Meriam Ibrahim's case drew furious response from Britain, U.S. and EU
- Charges came after she married Christian U.S. citizen Daniel Wani
- She gave birth to a baby daughter just 12 days after she was jailed
- Ms Ibrahim was also sentenced to 100 lashes for 'adultery' over her marriage
- Lawyer says she has been sent to a safe house for 'protection'

By [Daniel Bates](#) and [Damien Gayle](#)

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Smiling at the camera as she celebrates her freedom, this is the first picture of Meriam Ibrahim since she was suddenly released from prison in Sudan on Monday.

In an exclusive picture obtained by MailOnline, the mother-of-two is seen holding her baby daughter Maya who was born in prison whilst she was shackled to the ground.

On her right is her husband Daniel Wani, a Christian American citizen, who beams proudly with their son Martin, 21 months, by his knee and the couple's legal team around them.

Safwan Abobaker, an activist who works with religious campaign group Hardwired, which provided MailOnline with the picture, said: 'It's a happy day'.

The photo was taken at the safe house where Meriam is now hiding out.



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Free at least: Meriam poses hours after her release with her husband, Daniel (left) and her children, Martin (on Daniel's knee) and baby Maya and all those who bravely fought for her freedom in Sudan



Cruel: Meriam was released after a huge international outcry

The 27-year-old woman was sentenced to death last month for converting from Islam to Christianity. The case triggered an international outcry. She gave birth to a baby daughter while in prison.

'The appeal court ordered the release of Mariam Yahya and the cancellation of the (previous) court ruling,' Sudan's SUNA news agency said. The couple's 21-month-old son was also held in prison with Ms Ibrahim and newborn Maya.

Her lawyer Shareif Ali Shareif confirmed to MailOnline that she had been released after the court of appeal in Khartoum accepted her appeal and overturned the death sentence.

'She has been released from prison and she is on her way home with the children,' he said.

'She is very happy and the children are fine.

'Her husband Daniel Wani is overjoyed. He is so happy he is almost crying.'

He added that for now she was staying in Khartoum.

MailOnline has led the way in highlighting the plight of Ms Ibrahim, who was sentenced to death on May 15. After international pressure a government official said on May 31 that Sudanese officials were working to release her.

She was only finally freed this afternoon.

Ms Ibrahim's lawyer Mohaned Mostafa said after her release she had been sent 'to an unknown house to stay at for her protection and security.'

'Her family had been threatened before and we are worried that someone might try to harm her,' he said.

In an interview with CNN earlier this month, Al Samani Al Hadi Mohamed Abdullah said that if Meriam was killed, it would have 'enforced God's word' because she broke sharia. He has threatened to kill her himself if

6/24/2014 PICTURE EXCLUSIVE: Smiling with immense relief, the Sudanese mother sentenced to hang for 'converting to Christianity' hours after she was freed following her arrest. she was not executed.

Ms Ibrahim is married to Daniel Wani, an American citizen who is Christian.

Mr Wani's brother Gabriel, who lives in Manchester, New Hampshire, said: 'If it's true it is great news. Knowing him he will want to bring her back to America as soon as he can. I hope he can do that.'



'Barbaric': As well as the death sentence for apostasy (the crime of abandoning your religion) Ibrahim was also sentenced to 100 lashes for what the court deemed her adultery for marrying a Christian

Safwan Abobaker, an activist who works with religious campaign group Hardwired, which is based in the United States, said that the pressure to release Ms Ibrahim paid off.

He said: 'The Sudanese government was embarrassed by all the attention so they freed her.'

'It's better for her to come to America now as her half brother said that he would kill her if the court did not carry out the sentence.'

'The Sudanese government needs to protect Meriam and the U.S. embassy in Sudan needs to find a way of bringing her to America quickly.'

'The U.S. government needs to grant Meriam asylum or find a way to let her come to America right away. She needs to come to America.'

Tine Ramirez of Hardwired added that there will be a meeting on Tuesday between Meriam's lawyers and officials at the U.S. embassy in Sudan to discuss a potential move to America.

Senator Roy Blunt, a Missouri Republican, who had written letters to Secretary of State John Kerry demanding action to help free Meriam, welcomed the decision to release her - but called for more action to help her.





Daniel Wani, Ms Ibrahim's Catholic husband, with their daughter: The couple's 20-month-old son was also jailed

He said: 'I am very pleased that the Sudanese court has reportedly cancelled Meriam Ibrahim's death sentence and ordered her release.

'I continue to urge U.S. officials to work quickly and use all resources available to immediately provide Meriam and her family with safe haven in the United States'.

Juergen Schurr, legal advisor with human rights charity Redress, which has been working with Meriam's lawyers, said: 'Until we see the judgement I think we are still a bit cautious because we are very concerned if the government did not address both charges.

'Meriam was given the death penalty for apostasy and the lashes for adultery.

'The lashes could still be in place and we are concerned that both charges should be dismissed'.

Schurr added that he Meriam had a 'clear case' for seeking compensation from the Sudanese government but he has yet to win a payout for anyone he has represented in the country.

NINE MONTHS IN HELL: MERIAM IBRAHIM'S LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM

2011 - Meriam Ibrahim, who was raised Christian by a Christian mother, marries Daniel Wani, a Catholic from South Sudan who is a U.S. citizen

September 2013 - Meriam is arrested on charges of apostasy and adultery for practicing Christianity and marrying Wani, a Christian. Her son is held in prison with her

May 15, 2014 - Meriam, who is eight months pregnant, is sentenced to death by hanging and 100 lashes after refusing to renounce her religion

May 23 - Meriam gives birth to baby Maya while shackled in prison

May 28 - Mr Wani meets his baby daughter for the first time. Both children are held in prison with their mother because authorities won't release them to the care of a Christian

May 30 - U.S. lawmakers join British MPs in calling for Sudan to release Meriam, as international outcry over her sentence increases

June 1 - Sudanese officials raise hopes when they claim they are planning to release Meriam - only to dash it when other officials deny she is getting clemency

June 18 - Sudanese authorities finally remove the shackles from Meriam's legs at the insistence of her doctors

June 23 - A Sudanese court overturns Meriam's death sentence and orders her released from prison

As well as the death sentence for apostasy (the crime of abandoning your religion) Ms Ibrahim was also sentenced to 100 lashes for what the court deemed her adultery for marrying a Christian.

Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director Sarah Jackson said: 'Today's ruling is a small step to redressing the injustice done to Meriam.'

'However, she should never have been prosecuted. Meriam was sentenced to death when eight months pregnant for something which should not be a crime. Furthermore, her abhorrent treatment, including being shackled, violated international human rights law against ill-treatment.'

'Amnesty International would like to pay tribute to all those who contributed to this massive showing of support. Their letters showed the Sudanese authorities that people around the world were outraged by Meriam's ordeal.'

Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-New Hampshire) and Kelly Ayotte (R-New Hampshire) also welcomed the news.

In a joint statement they said: 'Meriam's imprisonment and death sentence for exercising her fundamental right of religious freedom was deplorable and a gross violation of basic human rights.'

'We will continue to work closely with Mr Wani to help ensure that Ms Ibrahim and her children are brought quickly and safely to the United States.'

Born to a Muslim father, she was convicted under Islamic sharia law that has been in force in Sudan since 1983 and outlaws conversions on pain of death.

She gave birth just 12 days after the verdict. It had been thought she was still shackled throughout the delivery and beyond, according to the rules which stipulate the treatment of death row inmates in Sudan.

But Mohanad Mustafa, one of Ms Ibrahim's lawyers, told AFP last week that jailers removed the chains after she gave birth to her daughter.

'This is on order by the doctor,' he said, adding that he didn't think the shackles would be put back on again.

'After she gave birth the conditions got better,' said Mr Mustafa. 'She has air conditioning. She has a good bed,' he said after he and Ms Ibrahim's Catholic husband, Daniel Wani, visited her.

Western governments and human rights groups have pressured the Sudanese to release Ms Ibrahim.

European Union leaders earlier this month called for revocation of the 'inhumane verdict,' while Secretary of State John Kerry urged Khartoum to repeal its laws banning Muslims from converting.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said the way she had been treated 'is barbaric and has no place in today's world.'

Ms Ibrahim, born in eastern Sudan's Gedaref state on November 3, 1987, is the daughter of a Sudanese Muslim father and an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian mother, according to a statement from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Khartoum obtained last week by AFP.

6/24/2014 PICTURE EXCLUSIVE: Smiling with immense relief, the Sudanese mother sentenced to hang for 'converting to Christianity' hours after she was freed fol... Her father abandoned the family when she was five, and she was raised according to her mother's faith, it says.

'She has never been a Muslim in her life,' said the statement signed by Father Mussa Timothy Kacho, episcopal vicar for Khartoum. Miss Ibrahim joined the Catholic church shortly before she married the Mr Wani in December 2011, the vicar said.

Mr Wani was born in Khartoum but is now a U.S. citizen, the U.S. embassy confirmed to AFP last Tuesday.

Archive: [Meriam Ibrahim's husband speaks out](#)



© Courtesy of Gabriel Wani

Ms Ibrahim in a picture from her wedding to Mr Wani: Ms Ibrahim, who is a trained doctor, and her husband own a barber shop, a mini-mart and an farm, said Father Mussa Timothy Kacho, episcopal vicar for Khartoum

The case against Ms Ibrahim dates from 2013 when 'a group of men who claim to be Meriam's relatives' filed an initial legal action, the vicar's statement said.

In fact, she had never seen those men before, the statement added, in comments confirmed by Mr Mustafa.

Ms Ibrahim, who is a trained doctor, and her husband own a barber shop, a mini-mart and an agricultural project in Gedaref, the vicar said.

Mr Mustafa did not know if there is a link between the businesses and the case against Ms Ibrahim, but he told AFP: 'Surely there is something behind this'.