

# Christian Woman Whipped Under Islamic Law

## Arrested For Not Wearing Traditional Muslim Headscarf In Public

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**FAITH UNDER FIRE**

Public-order police under Sudan's Islamist regime fined and whipped a Christian woman for not wearing a headcovering in 100-degree heat.

Cecilia John Holland, 27, was on a bus heading to her suburban Khartoum home April 13 when about 10 police officers forced the vehicle to stop and dragged her from it, according to the British-based charity Barnabas Fund.

The group said Holland was dressed modestly in long sleeves and an ankle-length skirt.

The policemen struck her while forcing her into their vehicle where four other women already were inside, the British charity said. She was held overnight at the police station.

The next morning, Holland was taken to Sizana Islamic Court where the Muslim policemen testified against her. She was not allowed to make a statement or speak in her own defense.

The court declared her guilty of charges she was "standing near a garden at night" and not wearing a scarf on her head.

She was sentenced to 40 lashes on the back and a fine of 10,000 dinars, the equivalent of a month's wage.

Authorities released her that afternoon after being whipped and paying the fine.

Earlier in April, the government had renewed its insistence that all Sudanese citizens residing in Khartoum would be under Islamic law.

Barnabas noted Holland is one of more than 2 million non-Muslim

southerners in the capital area who have been displaced as a result of the 21-year civil war between the mainly Arab Muslim north and the mainly African Christian and animist south, which has been fighting Khartoum's imposition of Islamic law.

Holland, who has paler skin because of a European grandparent, might have been mistaken for an Arab Muslim, but the British group says her name and accent should have proved her Christian and southern Sudanese identity.

Police reportedly told her no one, "not even a non-Muslim" was exempt from the Islamic dress code.