



Nabil Adib Abdalla:

“Discrimination against Christians: Perpetrated or Condoned by the State of Sudan”

Summary

In a lecture given at a conference hosted by St. Antony’s College at the University of Oxford, Nabil Adib Abdalla, an advocate and human rights lawyer from Sudan, gave an overview of the impact of Sudanese minority and family laws on the country’s Christian groups.

Abdalla stated that the legal framework of Sudan allows for discrimination against Christians in Sudan. He claimed that this was a result of the belief among the leadership of Sudan, which emerged in the context of Arab nationalism, that a nation can have only one identity.

“This problem came from politics, not religion,” Abdalla said. “There is no other people more tolerant than Sudanese Muslims. But the law is something else.”

Beginning at Sudan’s independence, laws discriminating in favor of Islam crept increasingly into the state’s legal code. During the first Sudanese civil war in the late 50s and early 60s, Abdalla said, “Christian schools in the South were nationalized and foreign missionaries were expelled.”

Abdalla highlighted the government’s drastic inability to manage Sudan’s high levels of religious diversity, and claimed that this failure eventually led to the secession of the South. “Any hope of peace was destroyed by the declaration of *shari’a* in the whole land and the attempt to assimilate everyone to the culture of the majority,” Abdalla said.

Today, the situation for Christians in Sudan remains tense, Abdalla said. “The general atmosphere now is that of suspicion.”