

Meriam Ibrahim, freed from Sudan, plans to settle in New Hampshire

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ROME (RNS) Meriam Ibrahim, the Sudanese Christian who was flown to Rome after her death sentence was overturned, is now dreaming of building a future in the U.S.

“We will begin a new life,” Ibrahim told Antonella Napoli, head of Italians for Darfur, according to the daily La Repubblica.

“My husband, a chemist, lost his job because of my event. Now we will go to New Hampshire where my brother-in-law Gabriel lives. They will help us. We will be all together as a true family.”

Ibrahim, 27, was spared a death sentence for apostasy and then barred from leaving Sudan.

She was flown to Rome in secret by the Italian government on Thursday (July 24) with husband Daniel Wani, her 20-month-old son Martin, and daughter Maya, who was born in a Khartoum prison two months ago.

Wani has joint Sudanese-American citizenship and the family was expected to fly to the U.S. shortly.

Within hours of landing in Italy, Ibrahim and her family met with Pope Francis, who thanked her for her courage and staying true to her faith despite the threat of execution.

“I never believed I would fulfill my lifelong dream—to meet the pope,” Ibrahim reportedly said. “I have always wanted and only wanted my faith. The love of my husband is a gift from God.”

Ibrahim had been trapped in Sudan after her release from prison, where she had been awaiting execution for refusing to renounce Christianity. Even though she has

been a Christian her entire life, Sudan considers her a Muslim because her father is Muslim.

She gave birth in chains to Maya in a Khartoum jail cell in May after her father claimed she had abandoned Islam and committed adultery with her Christian husband, as mixed-faith marriages are considered illegal.

“When I was asked to renounce my Christian faith, I knew what I was risking. But I did not want to renounce it,” Ibrahim told La Repubblica.

The Italian foreign ministry said Ibrahim was not available for media interviews; Napoli spoke to her via telephone.