

# Nigerian Pastor Once Persecuted Christians, But Now Lives for Christ

Before he met Jesus, Ado Umar was a Muslim enforcer, terrorizing and killing Christians for Islam

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The hunter has become the hunted. Ado Umar once was the hunter—a persecutor, a terrorist, a killer of Christians. Today he is the hunted—a Christian pastor who for 11 years has been branded worthy of death—

a target of the same Muslim extremism that fueled his own deadly hunt for Christians in his native Nigeria.

Umar's role reversed the day he met Jesus Christ during a vivid conversion experience as he laid plans to sabotage an evangelistic meeting in a Nigerian village and kill any Christians he could catch. Now his peers compare his conversion with the apostle Paul's on the Damascus Road.

Umar grew up with the fanatical zeal of a Muhammadan devotee. He was born into a devoted Muslim family of 16 members who are from Bagauda town in Kano State of northern Nigeria.

When he was very young, he was taken to live with his grandparents at Moroa River village in Nasarawa State of central Nigeria. While there, he received both modern and Islamic education.

Umar's exhibition of literary skills in the knowledge of the Quran led to the resolve of the Muslim umah, or "community,"

of his village to sponsor his further instructions in quranic education.

He was sent to an Islamic school in Keffi in central Nigeria and after that went to the renowned Kano Higher Islamic Institute, where he graduated with an advanced degree in Arabic studies. Upon returning to his village, Umar became a terror to the church. Local Muslim leaders encouraged him to attack Christians and supported him when he did.

All of that started to change for Umar on Aug. 5, 1989.

“On that day, the imam [Muslim cleric] sent for me and said: ‘Ado, this is your chance to show this community that the money we have invested in you is not in vain. We have learned that a Christian group is coming to this village to preach. Your task is to ensure that this doesn’t happen.’”

With this instruction, Umar went to work. “We carried petrol, kerosene and [swords],” he told Charisma. “I asked my colleagues to hide at strategic spots around the crusade ground so that when I raised the alarm, they will all attack the Christians.”

Instead, upon arriving at the location, Umar became so engrossed in a debate with the preacher that he forgot to issue the agreed signal for the attack. The deadly plan secretly was changed to the next day.

That night, after the crusade, Umar and his comrades’ plan was changed permanently, when Umar became a “victim” of the preacher’s words.

"That is the night I will never forget in my life. I had no peace of mind. I was so afraid, and didn't know what to do. I was just crying. I felt like dying. I couldn't sleep," Umar says today.

In the midst of his confusion Umar said a voice ministered to him by telling him: "I will show you that you are fighting yourself. Let me show you a verse in the Quran."

The verse, according to Umar, is one in which God is speaking to Jesus. It states: "Surely you will die, after that you will be resurrected, after that you will come back. The people who believe will be taken up, and those who do not believe you will be put to shame."

For Umar, the verse was a confirmation of the deity, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was the turning point in his life.

"For the first my life I knelt down and prayed. I told God I was at the crossroads and needed a sense of direction. I asked Him to give me courage because I knew that by accepting Him I will be killed," Umar said.

"The Lord never disappointed me," he added. "He responded to my prayer, and I have been saved."

Umar gave his life to Christ the following morning when he met the pastor of a local church congregation in his village. Today, 11 years later, Umar looks back joyfully on his life as a Christian. But since that day, the hunter has been the hunted. A price was placed on him for any Muslim who kills him.

He is married today with two children and is an ordained pastor with the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA). Umar currently is the pastor of an ECWA church in northern Nigeria.