

Dying Nigerian Christian Leader: 'I Will Never Deny My Savior'

On May 14, in plain view of his wife and one daughter, the Rev. Faye Pama Musa, general overseer of the Rhema Assembly International Church and secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Borno State, was gunned down by suspected Boko Haram Islamic terrorist members.

A month later, Open Doors workers visited his widow, Mercy, at her home in Maiduguri. The widow and mother of four warmly received the visitors into her house.

When she sat down to speak to Open Doors workers, she burst into tears. "True friendship is what I am seeing today," she said. "How did you manage to come to Maiduguri at this dangerous time when people are vacating the city? You are most welcome here in Jesus' name. I am so happy to see you again."

The events of the evening of May 14 will never be forgotten. Musa, Mercy and some of their children were home. While Mercy was preparing supper, Zion, a daughter who was sitting outside, noticed three armed men jumping the fence. She ran into the living room to alert her father. Musa glanced through the window and saw the intruders by the front door. The next moment the men forced their way into the house, shouting, "Everybody on the floor!"

Musa instantly knew why the men had come and tried to escape through the back door and over the fence. But they caught up with him and dragged him to the porch.

"Today you are a dead man. Call your Jesus to help you, Mr. CAN man," one of the terrorists shouted.

Musa did not give up without a fight. While wrestling with the three men, he continually called upon Jesus. For Zion, her father's desperate battle was too much to bear. She got off the floor and ran to the porch to where her father was struggling. She begged the attackers to spare his life. They fired a shot at her and missed. But the shock was too much for her and she fainted.

The struggle continued. Mercy heard her husband say, "I will never deny my Savior." As she crawled to the door, she saw the attackers shoot him three times in the head. Musa died on the spot. The attackers left in a car.

"Pastor Musa will be remembered as a father, a friend and as a role model. It will take the church in Borno a long time to cope with the enormous loss of this bold yet graceful leader and mentor," said an Open Doors spokesman. "His deepest desire was to see a strong church pressing forward despite perpetual harassment and killings at the hands of extremists."

Musa not only had friends among Christians. Many Muslims expressed shock at his death. A prominent Muslim security official strongly condemned the murder, saying, "Rev. Faye Pama Musa was an ambassador of peace. I will miss this Christian man who was a blessing and a huge asset for this society."

It is not certain what the future holds for Mercy and the children—Winner, 19, a student at the University of Ghana; Zion, 17, a secondary school student; and Praise, 11, and Miracle, 6, both primary school students. Open Doors is assisting with monetary help for immediate needs such as rent and school fees.

"Thank you for keeping us close to your hearts," voiced Mercy. "Thank you for this gift. But above all, thank you for your love for my family. May the good Lord bind us together even more."

Jerry Dykstra, Open Doors USA director of media relations, adds, "We are thankful Open Doors was able to be used by God to comfort and help Mercy and her family as well as many others in Nigeria caught up in the terrible slaughter of innocent victims by Boko Haram.

"The latest attack came Monday in a Christian area of Kano city in Kano State. Among the bombing sites was the Christ Salvation Pentecostal Church, where at least 12 people died, according to World Watch Monitor. The total could reach 50 victims. Please pray for an end to violence and that the Nigerian government will restore security."

According to the Associated Press, since 2010, the Boko Haram network is responsible for the killings of more than 1,600 people, many of them Christians. Nigeria is ranked No. 13 on the Open Doors 2013 World Watch List of the worst persecutors of Christians.