

Ethiopian Convert from Islam Dodges Dangers in Kenya

A Christian convert from Islam who fled hostilities in his native Ethiopia has faced attempted murder and ongoing death threats in Kenya.

Somali Muslim extremists in Kenya kidnapped and tried to kill Barack Hussein Kedir in July 2010, and most recently Kenyan-born Islamic extremists in contact with their co-religionists in Ethiopia sent a death threat to his cell phone on Dec. 3, the Christian told Compass. Since then, Hussein has reported the threatening text message to police, and his wife has fled the country with their two children.

“Although I have been experiencing all these countless problems, suffering persecution and merciless harassment both in my own country and outside of the country, I have never given up or lost my hope in serving the Lord,” Hussein said. “Muslims have tried to murder me several times, even here in Kenya.”

Born to Muslim community leaders in Arsi Negelle district in southern Ethiopia, Hussein had been a zealous Islamic youth coordinator who once harassed Christians before his conversion—a long process that led his father to shoot him in the leg for his commitment to Christ, he said.

Hussein had fled to Kenya in 2003 but secretly returned to his rural home in Ethiopia in June 2009 to help establish three new churches. When area Muslims discovered his work, they started looking for him with intent to kill him, forcing him to return to Kenya, he said.

Shortly after midnight on July 8, 2010, **Muslim extremists** in Nairobi slipped a CD under his door containing information on how they kill Christians and burn church buildings, along with

a threatening letter in the Arabic and Somali languages, he said. The next evening at about 7:30 p.m., presumed **Muslim extremists** rammed their car into the driver's side door of the car he was driving and told him they would kill him.

On July 27, 2010, four Somalis, presumed Muslim extremists, forced him into a car at about 9:30 p.m. in Nairobi and, at gunpoint, made him take a detergent (Jik) mixed with powdered soap (Omo), and he fell unconscious and was pushed out of the car, he said. Passers-by took him to a hospital, where staff determined that he must have been thrown out of the car at high speed.

The Somalis, whom he did not know, objected to his **preaching Christianity**, he said.

Hussein converted to Christianity in 1995 after a series of life-threatening episodes that began in 1990. Previously he had traveled to various regions teaching about Islam and developed hostility toward other religions; he harassed many Christians, stealing their food and trying to burn some church buildings, he said.

"While I was practicing and spreading Islamic faith in the country like wildfire, something amazing happened to me," Hussein said. "I **converted to Christ** in an unusual way, when Jesus revealed Himself to me through difficult circumstances in which I almost lost my life."

In 1990 he was mysteriously blinded, he said. After hospital treatment and the prayers of Muslim leaders were of no avail, he said he heard the voice of Jesus saying He loved him.

"In response I said, 'No, I do not need your help, go away,'" he said. "The voice then said to me, 'Do you need to get back your health?' I said, 'Yes, but I do not need you.'"

Hussein told Compass he later became hopeless and heard the voice again bidding him to ask to be healed, but that again he

declined.

"That very evening I saw a white image, and there came the sign of the cross, and I rebuked it," he said. "The house shook like there was an earthquake. I then decided to cover myself inside the blanket. Everyone inside the house was frightened. Then came again the cross. This time I wanted to catch the cross. My eyes then got opened, though I could not see well. It was very red. Then another voice came to me saying, 'I am Christ Jesus, follow Me. I am the one who made you blind. I now have healed you.'"

Still skeptical about the healing, he left for a predominantly Christian area to preach Islam, he said, but he lost all sight again and was also paralyzed for seven months.

"I was then taken to my rural village to die there," Hussein said. "I used to lie on the floor, helping myself [to food or drink] right where I was lying. The place became filthy and smelly. Death dominated my thoughts. I questioned Allah, why he does not want to heal. I then contemplated committing suicide. At that point my eyes got opened and a voice called me again, 'Barack, I love you. I caused you to be paralyzed. I love you. I am Jesus Christ. Follow Me.'"

The voice directed him to a location about 200 kilometers (124 miles) away in order to regain his health.

"I found this to be very difficult," he said. "People said I was going crazy. I was then put on a horse and traveled for one hour to reach the bus station. Before reaching the destination, in a vision, I saw a narrow road and a white sword in front, and fire. I got afraid thinking that it wanted to kill me. That time I was barefoot. Then I was woken up, for I had reached the destination. There a cross sign was handed over to me and the message came, 'Follow Me.' I got healed miraculously, then returned back with the cross."

When he arrived home with the cross sign, his father shot him

in the leg, forcing him to try to take refuge in a church building—where he was initially rebuffed as an enemy of the faith.

“After a while I was accepted and was taken by the church to Jimma Bible College,” Hussein said. “There I had the seal to preach the **gospel** within the Jimma vicinity. Soon things turned bad. With my miraculous healing, especially carrying the cross sign around, I faced persecution from my own family as well as the community. It would have been safer for me to either kill myself or **recant the Christian faith**, but I endured it all, and finally I fled to Kenya in 2003.”

He was admitted to Pan Africa Christian University, and after earning his degree went on to obtain a Master of Leadership from the Nairobi International School of Theology. He is now pursuing another master’s degree, this one in peace and international relations, at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

“God has called me to a precious life,” he said. “I have no regrets, and I thank God for delivering me from Islam. I know I have to pay the price, since those who wish to live a godly life must be ready to face **persecution**.”

Hussein submitted his application for asylum to a third country on July 19, 2010 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Officials there interviewed him on Nov. 4, 2010, and also last year, but to date he has not received a determination. A letter to the UNCHR requests that he not be returned to a country where he faces threats on his life or freedom.

A decision is expected at a scheduled May 17 appointment.