

Somali Christian Killed After Refusing to Wear Veil

✖ Three masked members of a militant Islamist group in Somalia last week shot and killed a Somali Christian who declined to wear a veil as prescribed by Muslim custom, according to a Christian source in Somalia.

Members of the comparatively “moderate” Suna Waljameca group killed Amina Muse Ali, 45, on Oct. 19 at 9:30 p.m. in her home in Galkayo, in Somalia’s autonomous Puntland region, said the source who requested anonymity for security reasons.

Ali had told Christian leaders that she had received several threats from members of Suna Waljameca for not wearing a veil, symbolic of adherence to Islam. She had said members of the group had long monitored her movements because they suspected she was a Christian.

The source said Ali had called him on Oct. 4 saying, “My life is in danger. I am warned of dire consequences if I continue to live without putting on the veil. I need prayers from the fellowship.”

“I was shocked beyond words when I received the news that she had been shot dead,” the source in Somalia told Compass Direct News by telephone. “I wished I could have recalled her to my location. We have lost a long-serving Christian.”

Ali had come to Galkayo from Jilib, 56 miles from Kismayo, in 2007. She arrived in Puntland at the invitation of a close friend, Saynab Warsame of the Darod clan, when the Islamic extremist group al Shabaab invaded Kismayo, the source said. Warsame was born in Kismayo and had lived in Jilib but moved to Puntland when war broke out in 1991.

The source said it is not known if even Warsame knew of Ali’s

conversion from Islam to Christianity.

"She might not have known because Warsame is not a Christian," he said.

In 1997 Ali, an orphan and unmarried, joined the Somali Christian Brothers' Organization, a movement commonly known as the Somali Community-Based Organization. As such she had been an active member of the underground church in the Lower Juba region.

Muslim extremists have targeted the movement, killing some of its leaders after finding them in possession of Bibles. The organization was started in 1996 by Bishop Abdi Gure Hayo.

Suna Waljameca is considered "moderate" in comparison with al Shabaab, which it has fought against for control over areas of Somalia. It is one of several Islamic groups in the country championing adoption of a strict interpretation of shariaal Shabaab, said to have links with al Qaeda, another group vying for power is the Hisbul Islam political party. While al Shabaab militia have recently threatened forces of Hisbul Islam in Kismayo, Suna Waljameca has declared war on al Shabaab.

Among Islamic militant groups, Suna Waljameca is said to be the predominant group in Puntland.

It is unknown how many secret Christians there are in Somalia. Compass sources indicate there are no more than 75, while *The Economist* magazine hedges its estimate at "no more than" 1,000. But what is certain is that they are in danger from both extremist groups and Somali law. While proclaiming himself a moderate, President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed has embraced a version of sharia that mandates the death penalty for those who leave Islam.

Christian Servants

In 1994 Ali worked with the Belgium contingent of United Nations Operations in Somalia as a translator. The same year she was a translator during a peace conference aimed at bringing together warring clans in the lower Juba region.

Her death follows the murders of several other Christians by Islamic extremists in the past year. Sources told Compass that a leader of Islamic extremist al Shabaab militia in Lower Juba identified only as Sheikh Arbow shot to death 46-year-old Mariam Muhina Hussein on Sept. 28 in Marerey village after discovering she had six Bibles. Marerey is five miles from Jilib, part of the neighboring Middle Juba region.

On Sept. 15, al Shabaab militants shot 69-year-old Omar Khalafe at a checkpoint they controlled six miles from Merca, a Christian source told Compass. Al Shabaab controls much of southern Somalia, as well as other areas of the nation. Besides striving to topple President Ahmed's Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu, the militants also seek to impose a strict version of sharia.

In August al Shabaab extremists seeking evidence that a Somali man had converted from Islam to Christianity shot him dead near the Somali border with Kenya, sources said. The rebels killed 41-year-old Ahmed Matan in Bulahawa, Somalia on Aug. 18.

In Mahadday Weyne, 62 miles north of the Somali capital of Mogadishu, al Shabaab Islamists on July 20 shot to death another convert from Islam, Mohammed Sheikh Abdiraman, at 7 a.m., eyewitnesses told Compass. The militants also reportedly beheaded seven Christians on July 10. Reuters reported that they were killed in Baidoa for being Christians and "spies."

On Feb. 21 al Shabaab militants beheaded two young boys in Somalia because their Christian father refused to divulge information about a church leader, according to Musa Mohammed Yusuf, the 55-year-old father who was living in a Kenya refugee camp when he spoke with Compass.