

Somali Muslims Cut, Beat Christian Unconscious

A Somali Christian in Kenya is nursing injuries after young Muslim men from his country beat him with iron rods and wooden clubs last week, leaving him unconscious at a church entryway.

Hassan, a 25-year-old refugee from Somalia whose surname is withheld for security reasons, had hardly been raised as a Muslim, having received Christ at age 7. But the Somali neighbors in Kenya who attacked him left him for dead on Oct. 27, bleeding and naked, on the assumption that as a Somali he was born into Islam and was therefore an apostate deserving of death, the young man told Compass.

He and his mother, a convert from Islam who fled war in Somalia 10 years ago after the death of her husband, are part of an underground house church.

In a town in Kenya undisclosed for security reasons, Hassan was returning home from running errands at 8:30 p.m. when the six young Muslim men stopped him. They hit him with a metal bar on his forehead and face, he said, and he lost two teeth on the spot. Others hit him on the back.

Some stomped on his stomach while he was on the ground as others hit him on his legs, he said through bandages on his nose and above his mouth. His hands were bandaged where they wounded him with a knife.

The attackers stripped him of his clothes as he bled and dragged him away, dumping him at the entrance of an area Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Some passersby found him and called his mother, whose name is withheld for security reasons.

"When I reached the scene of the attack, my son was lying in a pool of blood," she told Compass. "I wailed and did not know what happened to me. I only gained consciousness after sometime, when so many people, including the police, had arrived at the scene. The attackers had covered my son all over with dirt."

He was rushed to a hospital, where he received a blood transfusion. When Compass met with him and his mother on Oct. 31, he still had several bandages on his face, his head cloaked in a wrap of grey fabric.

"Since the time my son was attacked, we have been spending sleepless nights due to the pain that he has been going through," his mother said. "He risks losing a third tooth, which is adding more pain for him. He also complains of abdominal pains; possibly he might have hurt some of his internal organs. But we are helpless; we have no money for specialized medication for him."

Police have arrested two of the assailants. The other four Muslims are still on the run, and Hassan and his mother said they fear justice will not be done due to area hatred for converts from Islam.

"I know the community does not like us because of our Christian faith, but we have done nothing bad," Hassan said.

His mother, who has six sons younger than Hassan and two daughters, noted that the area police commissioner is a Muslim in a Muslim-majority area. The arrest of two assailants is a hopeful sign that at the same time creates fear that area Muslims will make retaliatory strikes, she said.

"We need to relocate," she said. "The other sons are traumatized, especially now that two of the attackers are in police custody."

Neighborhood Muslims gradually surmised that the widow was a

convert to Christianity; when Muslim women passed by her home every Friday inviting her to go to the mosque with them, she would always tell them she wasn't feeling well, she said.

"What happened to my son is the climax of the threats that I have been receiving from my Muslim neighbors," she said. "They have now discovered that we are Christians. They have heard my small children sing Christian songs. In fact, there are rumors going round that I am the pastor of the group, but my strength is from God and my seven sons."

She and Hassan speculated that the Somali Muslim neighbors attacked him because "the oldest son is the strength of the mother."

Her faith, she said, remains strong.

"Even though he has been beaten, I trust God to protect us," she said. "I will not return to Islam; I will stand with Christ."

For his part, Hassan said that even when they were beating him, he was praying.

"In spite of what happened, I don't feel I'm losing my Christian faith," he said. "I still need to fight for the Christian faith, in spite of what I'm feeling now."