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Compass Direct ~ Nigerian Churches Marked for Demolition - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/2/1 6:35

[Image: <https://www.sermonindex.net/images/compass.gif>]

Nigerian Churches Marked for Demolition in Zamfara State

Draconian decrees – including killing “infidels” – come with sharia.

by Obed Minchakpu

GUSAU, Nigeria, January 31 (Compass) – “For your information, the state Governor, Alhaji Ahmed Sani, has ordered that your church should be demolished before his arrival in this town tomorrow. So, we shall carry out this directive to morrow morning.”

On October 10, 2003, the Rev. Seth Saleh, then pastor of St. Peter’s Anglican Church in Bakura town in Zamfara state, received a Bakura town councilor as an unexpected guest in his house with the above message. The following day, the local government demolished St. Peter’s Anglican Church.

The demolition of that church in Bakura marked the beginning of an assault by Islamic fundamentalists in Zamfara under the leadership of Gov. Sani through imposition of sharia (Islamic law). In Gusau town alone, 14 churches have been marked out for demolition.

Those 14 churches have already received demolition notices, according to Rev. James Obi, pastor of Channel of Blessings Church and secretary of the Zamfara state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria. They include Eternal Life Bible Church, Christian Faith Bible Church, Chapel of Grace, Christian Evangelical Fellowship of Nigeria, National Evangelical Mission, Assemblies of God Church, Channel of Blessings and Living Faith Church.

Other Zamfara state churches earmarked for demolition are the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Embassy, Church of Christ in Nigeria, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church, Colgate Church and Deeper Life Bible Church.

The government demolished Rev. Obi’s Channel of Blessings church in 1997, and it has marked his rebuilt church for destruction as well.

“We have been served with demolition notices and even then, there have been announcements over the radio and television on the churches to be demolished,” Rev. Obi lamented. “It is just a matter of time, and these churches will be no more.”

Champion of Jihad

John Garba Danbinta, Anglican bishop of Gusau, said the demolition of St. Peter’s Anglican Church in Bakura came on Gov. Sani’s orders.

“The governor is from Bakura, and because he is the champion of Islamic jihad in Nigeria, he felt it will be unwise for a church to be seen in his hometown,” Bishop Dabinta said.

The bishop pointed out these arbitrary demolitions to refute those in Nigeria who declare Christians face no opposition from the state.

“The news outside Zamfara state is that everything is okay with Christians here,” he said. “Some claim that the governor is good and treating Christians well, that Christians do not have problems – but this is false. The problem of persecution of Christians here is a reality. It is a major problem facing us today in Zamfara state.”

St. Peter’s Rev. Saleh, now pastor at St. John’s Anglican Church in Kaura Namoda, recalled how officials often had promised that sharia would only be applied to Muslims. Sharia had long been in effect in civil matters, as in all of Nigeria, but its imposition in criminal matters in 12 northern states has thrown the country into a constitutional crisis.

“When sharia was introduced by the government of Zamfara state, we were told that it is meant to guide Muslims in the

ir faith and that it has nothing to do with us Christians,” Rev. Saleh said. “Surprisingly, sharia is now a weapon being used against the church in Zamfara state.”

Killing Infidels

Sharia as a weapon has been particularly sharp on Kabiru Lawal, a former Muslim who four months ago received Christ. The Hisbah Commission, Zamfara state’s agency for the enforcement of the sharia, is gunning for his life.

In late December and early January, agents of Hisbah invaded the Lawal family’s house three times looking for the 29-year-old man. Agents told family members that whenever Lawal is found, he should be prepared to pay the supreme price of abandoning Islam – death.

Each time the Hisbah arrived, Lawal was at the Federal Medical Centre in Gusau town due to illness.

He is now in hiding, no longer free to walk the streets of Gusau. His father, Mallam Lawal, comes from a family of Islamic clerics.

In 2002, Lawal read in the Quran about the second coming of Jesus into the world. Lawal, who holds a diploma in business administration from Kaduna Polytechnic in northern Nigeria, said his decision to investigate the life of Christ was informed by his desire to know whether “Jesus was coming as a Muslim or a Christian.”

Tunde Adebayo, a relative, gave Lawal a pocket size New Testament in 2003, which he hungrily read.

Lawal said the Holy Spirit revealed to him that Jesus is coming back not as a Muslim, as Muslims believe, but to take those Christians who believe in Him. He began to attend church services. Last September 3, he went to the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) church in Gusau town and asked to receive Christ into his life.

“The Bible clearly presented who Jesus Christ is and provided answers as to why he will be coming back into the world,” Lawal said. “The Spirit told me that unless I receive Christ into my heart, I will perish with other Muslims because they do not know the true God.”

His family stiffly opposes his conversion, but Lawal said there is no returning to Islam.

“Nothing on earth will make me turn away from Christ,” he said, “not even if I will be slaughtered like a ram.”

Draconian Decrees

Since the introduction of the sharia in January 2000, Zamfara authorities have banned Christians from sharing their faith or building churches, said Anglican Bishop Danbinta.

Officials are keeping Christians from building churches, he said, by making it impossible for them to acquire land. “We cannot get land, because there is a deliberate government policy to deny Christians land to build churches,” Bishop Danbinta said.

There are about 4,000 Anglicans in Zamfara, yet Bishop Danbinta said that in almost all parts of the state the government has refused to allow the church land to build places of worship.

“Sharia, it would seem, is being implemented to curtail Christianity, since it is only targeted at Christians,” he said.

70 Mosques, 0 Churches

The Rev. Barnabas Sabo, pastor of the ECWA church in Gusau town, concurred that local governments are using sharia to deny churches land.

Towns denied lands for building churches include Mada, from which Rev. Sabo’s church members have to trek more than 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) to Talata Mafara to attend worship services.

Other towns and villages where the ECWA church has been denied land are Kasuwa Daji, Dansadau, Tsibiri in Talata Mafara, and in the Bakura area.

“Gov. Sani, in six years of introducing sharia in the state, has used public funds to build well over 70 mosques,” Rev.

Sabo said. "Yet no single church has been built by this same government. How fair is this?"

Apart from denial of lands to churches in Zamfara state, Christians have encountered difficulties in other sectors, such as education, where discriminatory school fees have been forced on Christian students and pupils, and there is no teaching of what is known in Nigerian schools as Christian Religious Knowledge.

There is no employment for Christians in the public service, and a ban has been placed on Christian radio and television programs.

The imposition of sharia in criminal matters in 12 northern states has resulted in numerous conflicts bringing death to thousands of persons, most of them Christians.

"If there is anything anybody can do to hurt me, it is for such a person to stop me from serving God the way I want and to stop me from sharing my faith," Bishop Danbinta said. "This is precisely what we as Christians are experiencing in Zamfara state."

END

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Re: Compass Direct ~ Nigerian Churches Marked for Demolition, on: 2006/2/11 0:44

How can one respond to this. Words just are not there for this one.

We need to be praying for these people.

I know that this type thing will be only spreading through-out the world, and even come here after too long ... but we need to be praying for these people, for strength and remember them daily.

It doesn't hurt to have a globe in your bedroom or living room to remind us what is really "going on".

We get a little persecution at work or school or in our open air work and we talk about for a week.

Look at this article. Dear God ... if we don't pray for strength for them, then when our time comes, who will be left to pray for us ?

Thanks for Posting this.

This had 12 views at the time I'm posting this.

I pray that changes somehow.

I feel badly myself that I don't check the News as closely as the other boards, sometimes.

Re:, on: 2006/2/11 19:20

I never heard of Compass Direct. Hmm!!

Thanks!!