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As loss of Chris Leggett is mourned, missionaries leave country after another Al-Qaeda threat

By Edward Ross

Compass Direct (01.07.2009) / HRWF (02.07.2009) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Email: info@hrwf.net - As funeral services were held in Tennessee for Christian aid worker Christopher Leggett yesterday, tensions remained high for Christians in the capital of Mauritania, where he was slain last week.

A missionary who works in the capital city of Nouakchott told Compass that following the street assassination of Leggett by an al-Qaeda linked group the morning of June 23, the danger level in the city has forced him and his team to temporarily relocate to a European country.

"After the crime various believers were arrested, and the community of workers is going through very tense moments because of another threat by al-Qaeda and the lack of security in the country," said the missionary, who requested anonymity. "Our leaders have asked us to leave the country for a while, as the government had sent a security force of 10 policemen to guard our home 24 hours a day. Our mobility was limited, and we left the country under police escort to the airport."

Leggett was shot in a crowded market area in front of the language and computer school he operated in Nouakchott. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the North African unit of the al-Qaeda terrorist network, claimed responsibility for the murder on an Internet site, accusing Leggett of "missionary activities." A North African al-Qaeda spokesman aired a statement on an Arab TV station saying the group killed Leggett because he was allegedly trying to convert Muslims to Christianity.

At least two gunmen approached Leggett in broad daylight, stunning local people unaccustomed to such brazen attacks.

"It's a very crowded area, and it was in the morning in the midst of many people," the missionary told Compass. "Apparently they wanted to kidnap him, and as they were not able, they then shot him three times in the head and he died. Chris was sharing the gospel with a lot of fervor, and also the fact that the country is going through a political and social crisis could have contributed to this crime."

More than 1,000 mourners, including many from outside the United States, reportedly attended Leggett's funeral in Cleveland, Tenn., where he grew up. Husband and father of four children ages 15, 13, 12 and 8, Leggett taught at a center specializing in computer science and languages in El Kasr, a lower-class neighborhood in Nouakchott. Leggett, his wife Jackie and their children had lived in Mauritania for more than six years.

Leggett directed an aid agency that provided training in computer skills, sewing and literacy, and he also ran a micro-finance program.

At his funeral yesterday at First Baptist Church, his father Jay Leggett said, "Our family's great hope has been that Chris will not have died in vain, but that through his physical death, thousands will continue to be challenged passionately to join him in demonstrating God's love."

The family issued a statement of thanks for the care, concern and outpouring of sympathy from people in the United States and other countries, according to the Chattanooga Times Free Press.

"Our family was energized during every minute of the five hours of visitation by the prayers of thousands of people from around the world," the statement said. "It is wonderful to experience the fact that by the grace and power of God, one man touched the lives of thousands of people."

Reading from a written statement, Leggett's father ended with a tearful recitation of a hymn.

"To God be the glory, to God be the glory, great things He has done and great things He will do," he said.
