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Terror group aims to rid Somalia of Christians

By Sandi Roberts

The Examiner (16.04.2012) – Somalia's Islamist terror group al Shabab wants to rid the Muslim country of all Christians and is specifically targeting Christian converts from Islam according to CBN.

Al Shabab recently joined with al Qaeda and wants Sharia law implemented in the country.

In 2008 an Al Shabab video swept the internet portraying the brutal beheading of 25-year-old aid worker Mansour Mohammed. His crime was simply his conversion from Islam to Christianity.

One year ago, a Christian convert was awakened in his home by Al Shabab soldiers. "They ransacked my house, searched my bag, and found several pages from a Bible," he told CBN News. "They had crosses on them."

He was taken away, imprisoned and tortured.

"I was blindfolded and they put me in a dark, underground cell. They beat me up with a wooden baton," he explained.

"They wanted to know where I got the Bible pages and if I knew of any others like me," he continued. "When they finally took the blindfold off, I noticed three dead bodies in the room. They placed them there just to frighten me" CBN writes.

Yet, before the terrorists could follow through with their plan of killing him, he and two other prisoners made a daring escape.

"The guards thought they had locked our cell door, but it wasn't locked. We opened it, ran to the wall, and started climbing," Abdi recalled. "The guards opened fire on us. Bullets killed one of my cellmates, but the other prisoner and I jumped over the wall."

Abdi, which is an alias, is now living with his family in a safe location. Although he feels physical pain from the torture he endured, he says he feels closer to God.

"I was happy to go through all this because now I am stronger spiritually," Abdi said. "People prayed for me to escape. Their prayers are what saved my life."

Somali Christian leaders estimate fewer than 200 Christians exist in this country of 10 million.

One lady, who asked to be called Fozia, was publically flogged for deciding not to wear a burqa. She was beaten because officials said she was "naked" although she was simply dressed modestly.

She inched her way home with debilitating injuries, and her neighbor came to her aid.

"I was bleeding; my flesh was peeling," Fozia recalled. "It was extremely painful."

As it is too risky to own a Bible, she listens to Christian radio broadcasts from neighboring Kenya.

There is a safehouse run by Voice of the Martyrs which is in a secret location in the Horn of Africa.

At the safe house, Somali Christians gather for a time of worship and Bible study. It not only gives former Muslims a place to eat and sleep, it provides them with spiritual fellowship and discipleship.

Fozia and other Somali Christians are praying for a better life -- one free from the oppression of al Shabab and other Islamists.

"Pray that we Somali believers will live our lives closer to the kingdom of God," Fozia asked. "Pray that we will endure the weight of life in this Islamic nation."

Islamic extremists behead another convert in Somalia

Young Christian man murdered outside Mogadishu

By Simba Tian

Compass Direct News (08.02.12) – Islamic extremists from the rebel al Shabaab militia in Somalia beheaded a Christian on the outskirts of Mogadishu last month, sources said.

The militants fighting the transitional government in Mogadishu murdered Zakaria Hussein Omar, 26, on Jan. 2 in Cee-carfiid village, about 15 kilometers (nine miles) outside of the Somali capital, they said. Omar had worked for a Christian humanitarian organization that al Shabaab banned last year.

His body was left lying for 20 hours before nomads found it and carried it into Mogadishu, a close friend said.

"We have been communicating with Omar, and he was sharing with me his life as a Christian," the friend said. "Last year he mentioned to me that his life was in danger when the NGO [Non-Governmental Organization] he worked for was banned by the al Shabaab."

The friend said he identified the body.

"One of the persons who saw him said, 'This is the young man who stayed in Ethiopia, and people have been saying that he left Islam and joined Christianity.'"

Omar converted to Christianity seven years ago while in Ethiopia, where he lived with relatives. He returned to Somalia in 2008 and completed his university education in 2009 with a degree in accounting.

Omar had married in the latter part of 2010. He is survived by his wife, his parents (originally from central Somalia), a brother and four sisters.

Last September, the militants beheaded another young Christian near Mogadishu. The militants, who have vowed to rid Somalia of Christianity, killed Guled Jama Muktar on Sept. 25 in his home near Deynile, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) from Mogadishu.

Earlier that month, a kidnapped Christian convert from Islam was found decapitated on the outskirts of Hudur City in Bakool region, in southwestern Somalia. Juma Nuradin Kamil was forced into a car by three suspected Islamic extremists from the al Shabaab terrorist group on Aug. 21, 2011 and murdered on Sept. 2, area sources said.

With estimates of al Shabaab's size ranging from 3,000 to 7,000, the insurgents seek to impose a strict version of *sharia* (Islamic law), but the transitional government in Mogadishu fighting to retain control of the country treats Christians little better than the al Shabaab extremists do. While proclaiming himself a moderate, President Sheikh Sharif Sheik Ahmed has embraced a version of *sharia* that mandates the death penalty for those who leave Islam.

Al Shabaab was among several splinter groups that emerged after Ethiopian forces removed the Islamic Courts Union, a group of *sharia* courts, from power in Somalia in 2006. It has been designated a terrorist organization by several western governments.

Somali convert from Islam whipped in public

Woman left bleeding in front of hundreds of spectators for becoming Christian

By Simba Tian

Compass Direct News (10.01.2012) – A Somali convert from Islam was paraded before a cheering crowd last month and publicly flogged as a punishment for embracing a “foreign religion,” sources said.

Sofia Osman, a 28-year-old Christian from Janale city in Somali's Lower Shabelle region, had been taken into custody by Islamic extremist al Shabaab militants in November; the public whipping was meant to mark her release. She received 40 lashes on Dec. 22 while jeered by spectators.

“Osman was whipped 40 lashes at 3 p.m., but she didn't tell what other humiliations she had suffered while in the hands of the militants,” an eyewitness, told Compass, adding that whipping left her bleeding. “I saw her faint. I thought she had died, but soon she regained consciousness and her family took her away.”

The whipping was administered in front of hundreds of spectators after Osman was released from her month-long custody in al Shabaab camps. Nursing her injuries at her family's home, in the days after the punishment she would not talk to anyone and looked dazed, a source close in touch with the family said. She has since been relocated.

“Please pray for her quick recovery,” the source said.

Janale, one Somalia's major cities, is about 200 kilometers (124 miles) from Mogadishu.

Osman became a Christian four years ago and was a member of the underground church in the war-torn Horn of Africa country largely controlled by the al Qaeda-linked militants from al Shabaab.

The al Shabaab militia is being hunted down by Kenya Defense Forces in southern Somalia following the extremists' incursions into Kenya. They had killed and kidnapped tourists and aid workers inside Kenya, prompting military forces to formally enter into war to secure its borders.

In response, the al Shabaab militants have targeted churches in northern Kenyan towns such as Garissa in the hope of dividing Kenyans along religious lines. The Kenyan public, however, is largely backed the government decision to pursue the militants deep into Somalia.
