

Appendix 60:

From : John Danbinta <jdanbinta@yahoo.com>
Sent : May 25, 2007 9:17:28 AM
To : Jan&Fran Boer <boerjf@hotmail.com>
Subject :

| | | Inbox

Thanks for reminding me,

My experiences on Sharia in Zamfara are not quiet different from the one that I have had in 1990 when I was sent to work as Pastor before I became a Bishop even though one cannot over rule the fact that might be some slited ones.

In some of the Local Government areas in the State, when the sharia law was introduced, many churches were forced to relocate by the Governor. In Bakura for example, our former Governor's town, we have one church before the introduction of the Sharia. Even though the church was there for many years, the Governor asked us to relocate to a far place from the town, in fact, in side the bush where people would not see us and indeed becoming very, very difficult for some of our members to go and worship there. When we decided not to obey and do what he wanted, he directed his people to demolish our church building. It was demolished but our members kept worshipping under a Sun outside for some months, before he finally thought of what to do with us. His reasons were that, "He been the one that brought the Sharia to Nigeria, how on earth could there be a church immediately one approaches in his town as if it is a christians town? Our church happened to be on the side of the road and in fact, the first building to see before you enter the former Governor's town. To him, that was just as embarrassing as anything.

Furthermore, in view of the fact that even as I know that it was not always very easy in Zamfara State for Christians to build a place of worship, or even to have a piece a land being sold to them before the introduction of the Sharia law and even before it became a State Capital, I also believe that one could clearly see that the introduction of Sharia law really, worsen our sitionation as christians. Some Muslims in the rural areas especially the unlearned ones, thought that the introduction of the Sharia law in the State was simply meant a need of collective effort by Yerima to all Muslims to eject Christians from the State or to be hostile to them. After the innaugration of the Sharia law, some Muslims in the rural areas and in fact, even in the State Capital, changed their formal way of approach or relation to Christians.

It became so difficult for our churches to survive because most of the people that came from the east, west and south had leave for other states in the Middle belt, or down east, south and west. Many of them who were well-to-do, moved to Abuja or Lagos. We are still struggling to survive as church in Zamfara State. This is because the name alone "Zamfara States" sounds funny to some parts of Nigeria. At any time I go to places in the

east, west and south, and said that I am Bishop John from Zamfara State, many laughed at me while many others pitied me. But I always wondered why they laughing at me because I said to be from Zamfara State. This is just the effect of the Sharia in the State. Many of them from there view the State as a danger zone for Christians; because they could be killed at anytime. Well, I in particular, do not see it of feel it that way, probably because I was born in the north and all my ministry has been in Kano, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa, Kaduna and Zamfara States. Coupled with that I am also an Hausa man.

As an Anglican Bishop in the State, I have tried several times to pay a courtesy visit to the Governor to introduce myself to him as the new Anglican Bishop in his State, but he never gave me audience. Many at times, he accepted my invitation and responded verbally through messengers sending them to tell my senior priest in cathedral, "That the Governor said you should tell your Bshop to see him at so so time, which was never true. There was a time that I was in Abuja for something special when my pastor called me and said, "Sir, finally, the Governor sent a messege that he would want to see you today. (The notice would about 30 minutes before the of the appointment). I left Abuja very early in the morning leaving what I went to do, but just about 30 minutes drive to the town, my pastor called me again to say, "I am very sorry sir, if I had known, I wouldn't have told you to come. I could have kept quiet to allow you pursue something very important. The Governor had just left for Kaduna". In fact, it became boring to me. I was not going to see him for any favor or anything like that, but just to do my duty as Christian leader, to respect him my political leader of the state where I work. Period; and Iso to tell him that I was the new Anglican Bishop that took over from the Bishop that he knew who was there before me, and before his transfer to Kubwa, in Abuja. The former Bishop was the Rt. Rev. Simon Bala who was in Gusau the time Sharia was to be introduced. In fact, the year the Sharia was introduced in 2000, and the diocese was carved out of Sokoto diocese in 1999. I have worked fthen Sokoto or 6 years before Gusau Diocese was carved out of it. Simon Bala was the first Bishop in the diocese. He did not had it easy with the Governor Ahmed Sani Yerima, our former Governor.

However, even though I was not Bishop of Gusau before the Sharia law was introduced, I had been ministering in that area for six years, though not in the same church, but in the same area from Gusau to Yauri, and Yauri to Sokoto, and back to Gusau (Zamfara State) where I started as an ordained minister in 1991. In fact, before I was ordained, I was in Gusau 1982, 1990 just some few months as a church planter even before it became a State Capital. As at that time, our church in Gusau was under Sokoto district, while Sokoto was then under Kaduna diocese. So, I know what the introduction of had brought to the Christian church in Zamfara state. Tough and difficult times!! The harassment of our little girls and even married women in the schools where they taught and learned; and in fact, even on the streets, just for the that our girls wore trousers, dressed differently from Muslims girls and women, and entered motor-cycles/bikes etc.

Our former Governor " Alhaji Ahmed Sani Yeriman Bakura" related very well to the Christians leaders who were from the east, south and west to give them the impression that he loved Christians in his State, but denied many of us who were in his are in State the access to see him. For example, when he was contesting to be the president of

Nigeria, before he was disqualified, he wrote to almost all our eastern, western and southern and Anglican Bishops of his intention to contest as a president of our country, and many of them who are my friend kept telling and asking me what I knew about him. He didn't like the Anglican church because he was told that we were reaching out and planting churches in the rural areas. So, kept presenting himself as someone who love christians, and asking the Anglican church Bishops to mobilize their members to vote for him. Those Bishops kept calling me and asking me questions about him. He faile to know that a church that has seven million (7,000.000) must have worked as a team before it grows like that.

In short, the former Governor was not appraochable to many of us who were in Zamfara State when he was our Governor. He might have been to some, but not to me or to my denomination. This is evidently clear in the sense that he was aware of my predecessor and heard about my coming to his State as his successor (the former Bishop), but did not allow me to see him even though I wrote to him many times because of that, but my application were for many times turned down and thrown out to dust bin. However, the situation started to calm down when he was contesting to be the president of Nigeria. As at now, I don't know what the situation is because it was at that time then I left for the United States. Now that we have his deputy as our new Governor, pray that he would not follow his pattern of discriminatory styles of leader in Zamfara State. I and my pastors paid him a courtesy visit in last December for our Christmas Good Will Messege when he also told us his intention to contest as the Governor of the State; he seems very friendly and simple compared to our former Governor, and we assured him of our supports in praying and also voting for him. I am happy that he has won now, but let just pray that he too would not be against our church in the future or continue what Yerima was doing. That would be very unfortunate for us as a church of God that wants to grow.

Lastly, I have not any documents written by CAN or the Anglican church, but I hope to look for it when I go home.

Thanks,

+John