

Uganda: Despised by Her Family

Every shilling Grace had went to pay for her son's hospitalization. Since most hospitals in Uganda demand payment up front, she sold her very last cow. Then, her son died.

Immediately, her husband's relatives came to her home and an argument began. "The uncles wanted to take my son's body and bury him where his father was buried," she said. Her son, Michael, was a Christian convert, and the 50-year-old woman had wanted her pastor to perform her son's funeral. Instead, her Muslim relatives insisted that since her husband had left them to care for his family, they would perform Islamic rites. This issue had been a constant struggle ever since her husband had passed away several years ago.



Grace had married a prominent Muslim man in 1986 when she was about 20. The mountainous region in the eastern part of the country where she lives does have a church presence, but the majority of families in her village are Muslim. Grace agreed to practice Islam too. Two months into her marriage, however, she began attending church services. She couldn't abide by Islamic practices. Her husband's relatives, who live in the same village, may have noticed Grace going to church services, but they tolerated it since the couple was raising their four children as Muslims.

As soon as her husband was buried, his family came to Grace. In keeping with tradition, they tried to arrange a marriage for her. "They wanted me to get married to [my husband's] brother in order for me to produce more children for them. But I had to first go back to Islamic faith." Not willing to convert, she refused.



With that, her relatives cut the widow off from all support. Twice, the family even tried to have her killed. In both instances, unknown people came to her home at late hours of the evening. "But our Lord is good," she said, "I survived the attacks."

Grace fears her late husband's family was responsible for her son's death, though she can't prove it. Those involved in folk Islam have used poison to kill before. She believes the family grew angry after Michael graduated from university and became a Christian. None of her husband's relatives were able to obtain college degrees.

Though it has been difficult, Grace's church family has continued to help her. Grace hopes she can move to a safer location and be able to support her children. "If I got money now, I would just go buy land in another place and settle there." Right now, she has a small property where she grows carrots, peas, cabbages, beans, and soy beans. She said, "The situation is hard, but I try to survive."

Her daughter has also been ill. "At the moment my first daughter is now also suffering from the same illness that my son suffered from," Grace said. Though she was recently discharged from the hospital, Grace worries her daughter might also die.

She knows that while her relatives may intend to kill her and her daughter because of their faith, she trusts in God. She said, "I know their plans, but God knows my plans even the more. I will not be shaken, especially now that I have known that suffering is part of the Christian faith."



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