

Hintergrundmaterial zum Prozess gegen Pastor Joshua Esosa: Persönliche Erfahrungsberichte des Betroffenen und seiner Ehefrau, veröffentlicht durch den Journalisten Uzoma Ahamefule

“I am Innocent” - Nigerian Pastor Joshua Esosa Sentenced 15 Months In Austria For Drug Cries For Justice

This is a sad story of a Nigerian who is a pastor in one of the new generation churches in Vienna called Grace Ministries International. Pastor Joshua Esosa is from Edo State and in the narration of his unbelievable ordeal, he recounted how he had been arrested, framed up and jailed for a crime he said that he had never committed. His experience as he told it could only be likened to the American HOLLYWOOD films packed with action and suspense and as such incredible and scary for most people who are blacks and especially Nigerians living in Austria. We have heard that similar ugly stories happened many years ago but in recent years one can vouch that the Austrian police has made tremendous improvement that experiences like this one of Pastor Joshua Esosa is strange to most of us. Therefore, my worries which should be the feelings of most people are not against the Austrian police as an entity but rather against these few groups of people that have decided to pervert the course of justice by protecting the real criminal if the story of Pastor Esosa should stand. Consequently, I appeal to the Austrian police to help and dig out the truth since the crack down is not against race or colour but rather against evils and agents of Satan within us. We all should be partners in progress in circumstances like this since every system in every country is never completely free from bad ones which Austria is of course not immune to. Therefore, my sincere appeal is not only to the police authority but to the entire Austrian authority, corporate bodies and individuals that are concerned that our society is being threatened by idiots who make hard drugs accessible to our children to help in any way they can to expose the real offender/s in this case so that this innocent man will be set free, that is my humbly appeal. Globalisation of the world is not only in technology but also in the movements of humans. If Arnold Schwarzenegger who is originally from Steiermark, Austria could go to the US and rose to a point to have governed a state like California, a Nigerian, Pastor Joshua Esosa should not be ruined and destroyed because he could rise tomorrow to be a wonder turning bishop in Austria. Injustice done to one person is injustice done to all. Arise, people of conscience!

Here is the story of Pastor Esosa's tribulation.

“I am Pastor Joshua Esosa from Edo State. My story is so sad, humiliating and painful each time I remember that bitter experience of 2nd February 2011. On this day, I just closed from the church and went straight home in twelfth district in Vienna to an apartment provided for me by the church because as at of this time I had problems with my wife and because of the nature of the society we are living in, we were trying to sort out things living separately. At about 11pm on this day, my wife called me and said that she was sick and that I should come home to take care of the children so that she could go to the hospital. It was very unusual that I felt somehow. However, I told her that it was already too late because it would take me about an hour to get to there now and whether she could not wait till the next day. She insisted that I should please try to come. So, I now went to see her. When I got there it was around 12 midnight and I had to press the bell because I did not have the key. And before I could open the door the police had already accosted and apprehended me and said, ‘You drug dealer, drug dealer, drug dealer’. And I said, what; me a drug dealer? I did not even resist them as I allowed them to search me. They searched me and found €600 with the church cash card and said, ‘Yeah this is the drug money’. I told them that €400 of that €600 was the money of the church that I had withdrawn few hours ago from AKH and that if they go to the bank they would see that what I had told them was the truth.

They searched my bag and did not find anything and they took me that night to a destination I did not know that it was Burgenland until the next day. In the morning that day, I guess that it was around 10am because I did not have a watch, they took me to their office and started to interview me. They said that they knew me because they had been monitoring me selling drugs for over a year now and that the people I had sold drugs to were all in prison. I said, God forbid! They said that they recorded my voice, I then said good if you did that. So they now showed me some pictures on the computer and asked if I knew the people and I said that I didn't know them.

They now brought out the picture of the person they said that they had been monitoring, and the background was a winter background because the person was wearing a winter cap that covered his ears. So what they now did was to put me on my own winter cap and arrange it to look like the picture of the person they were looking for and took me pictures and then they said if anybody confirms that they know me in the prison that that would be all they needed. So they went to the prison and came back and said yes two people had confirmed that they knew me. I said what? I am not a drug dealer, I do not deal on drugs and I can never do that. They said that the judge had asked for me to be sent to prison immediately. That was how I was sent to prison on February 3rd, 2011 and I was there till September 23rd 2011.”

When I wanted to know whether he contacted people for help he replied and said “of course I contacted the Nigerian Embassy the same February but the embassy didn't show up until I was sentenced ending of July 2011 and they now came in August 2011. I contacted people, my fellow pastors and everybody. The letters my wife wrote to the embassy are still here.” I collected copies of the letters from him.

He went on. “I started a German course in the prison and one day while we were on break during one of our lessons I went back to my room and saw some strange people in the room and I turned back because I thought that I had entered a wrong room, but as I made steps to go back my room mate called me to come in that it was our room. I went in and did what I wanted to do and left back to the lecture. When our class was over after hours, I came back to my room and still met these people discussing. I went straight to my corner and was reading my bible when I had a call that I had a visitor who happened

to be my wife. By the time I went back to the room these people were no longer there and my roommate now told me that those people that I had seen before, that one of them had been my accomplice. I said what? Why did you not tell me while they were here so that I could confront them? I was very uncomfortable with the development and angry. I said to myself, I had not been allowed to go to the church in the prison with the reason that my accomplice went to the same church but now the same accomplice they had brought to my room perhaps to study me so that he could say that he knew me in the court, I wept. 2 hours later still infuriated, my lawyer came and I told him what had happened and he shared the same fears with me but told me not to worry that he would take care of that.

Before the first hearing they said that they had found powder which I had used in mixing drugs in my room and I told them that the only thing I knew that I had there in my room was powdered yam and I did not have any other powder and if they had found any other thing in my room it meant they had put it there. They said that they had also found black canvas in my room that was exactly the same type the drug dealer had worn and therefore it was evidence against me. On the court day my witness now brought the powdered yam to the court for the police to see that it was not the type of powder they had conceived in their minds. The judge now queried them why had they not done an examination of the powder in the laboratory first before coming to the conclusion that they had found a powder which I had used in mixing drugs? They now brought eight people to come and testify against me that I had sold drugs to them, but I thank God that six of the people said that they did not know me except those two people that were in the prison. And importantly too, one of these people that were supposed to have testified against me told the court that I had not been the one because he still had bought drugs from the person they had been looking for while I was still in prison. Again the judge ignored this information.

After this hearing they brought a strange report they had written about me and I was very upset and down. My roommate, an Austrian who could not stand my tears and the injustice meted to me anymore, pitied my sorrow and looked at me one day and told me that I was not the drug dealer. And I said to him; how did he know that I was not the one? He said that in his former room before he had been transferred to my room that the person they claimed that had been my accomplice had been his roommate and that one night he had heard him talking to someone in a low voice thinking that he had been asleep that I was not the one but that the real drug dealer was outside and that they were trying to protect him. I knelt down immediately, wept and begged him. I asked him; please, will you help me to write down these things you have just said now to the judge or public prosecutor? And he said that he was afraid to do so because he was also in prison. I tried as much as I could to convince him to see reasons why an innocent person like me should not be allowed to rot in prison, he refused and I decided to allow him but when my lawyer came I told him the story. My lawyer now in his wisdom included him as one of my witnesses without his consent and the day he got a letter from the court as one of my witnesses, he was very upset and I had to beg him close to tears to help me which he reluctantly after much pressure accepted.

On the final hearing day he came and told the court what he had heard and explained further that he had lived with me for sometime now in the same room and that he had studied me and had seen my kind of person, that I was not the drug dealer. But the judge shunned his testimony by telling him to go and sit down because he himself had equally had a drug case before. They now asked me if I knew these people, referring to those people that were supposed to have been my drug buyers, and I told them (court) that I did not know any of them and that I did not deal on drugs and that if I was a drug dealer that these people numbering over 50 here could not have come all the way from Vienna twice now to stand by me. I now asked the judge; in your years of experience, have you ever had the experience where this huge number of people turned out at different occasions to stand beside someone who is a drug dealer? And the judge said that what they were expecting me was to say sorry and I said, to say sorry for what, for what I did not do. He the judge now said okay, that they sentenced me for 15 months. They asked if I will appeal it. I said yes of course I will appeal it because I cannot accept what I did not do. And that was how the process of an appeal was made.

I was finally sentenced around ending of July 2011 and on September 23rd 2011 I was released. I was freed on a Friday and usually our prison closes on Fridays 12pm so while the door of our prison was opening that day I was let out, I was thinking that they were bringing in a new person but was surprised when I was told to pack my things within 5 minutes and leave. I had a bad feeling going through these sad moments within these few seconds and reacted to know why I should be asked to leave in 5 minutes under such command after having been kept here for so long. The person who brought the message said that he had told me, he closed the door and left. My roommates celebrated with me and helped me to pack my things. 5 minutes time he actually came, pushed me out and gave me €50 for my transport and asked me to come on the coming Monday to take any of my remaining things.

I spent about 8 hell months in that prison, from February 2011 to September 2011 for a crime I had not committed. I was traumatised for a sin I knew nothing about probably because I am a black man and a Nigerian. I nearly went mad for what I never imagined in my life. Over my dead body that I will deal on drugs as a man of God, my yes remains yes, I am not guilty. As I speak now, I do not know on which ground or why I was released because according to the sentence I was not supposed to have been set free before May 2012.

One thing I want the world to know is that, no matter the evidences manufactured against me, I am innocent. No matter the level of conspiracy against me, I am guiltless. The God I serve cannot be put to shame because He did not fail Abraham, He did not fail Hannah, He did not fail Job etc. and He can never fail me. I am on my knees.”

His wife speaks, “My husband is not a drug dealer. I want justice.”

The story of Pastor Joshua Esosa’s wife which she described as horror was pitiful and sad because of the shock the children had got.

In nutshell, she said that when the police men had come that day, that they had already slept and had only woken up by the thunder like noise from the smashed door by the police. She said that all what she had heard was ‘gbooz’ and that she had

to immediately jump up from bed and had to firstly rush to her last born, her son and that within almost the same seconds that police men had been everywhere in the room asking about her husband and ransacking all they could lay their hands on. She had sorrowfully narrated that the children had been scared to the marrow and that the fear of that horror had terribly traumatised them which they still have not overcome and may never completely overcome till the rest of their lives. She alleged that she had been threatened to lie to make her husband come to the house that night or else that they (police) would have to take her children to 'Jugendamt' (youth welfare office). She said that under such trembling shock and fear that she had to call her husband and lie to him as commanded that she had been seriously sick and had to go to hospital.

According to her, not sure of what to do to the door smashed by the police, she said that the door had remained un-repaired for about three months and that they had seen hell under winter cold because they were living with open door until they could not bear it anymore that they had to call someone who had carried out a minor repair that had helped them at least close the door against cold.

Her message to the world is that her husband is innocent because he is not a drug dealer and she wants the world to help her get justice. In her words "My husband is not a drug dealer. He has never done that and can never do that and I will stand for him anytime and anywhere. I want justice, they should free my husband."

Efforts made to get in contact with the judge to comment were yet to yield results before press time.

Help us to free an innocent man and improve the image of Nigerians and black Africans in Austria.

The appeal court hearing will be coming up on **June 6th, 2012 from 9:30am to 12pm in Landesgericht, Saal 305/3, Wickenburggasse 22, 1080 Wien.**

Please, we appeal for solidarity by turning up that day in court.

A demonstration has also been organised to take place on **June 1st**, 2012, starting from **Museumstraße 7, 1070 Vienna** by **2:00pm**.

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