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'Pastor who can't be killed' in Houston for surgery

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HOUSTON (KTRK) -- An American missionary was killed by a terrorist attack in Uganda, an attack that left an African pastor severely injured. That was nine years ago and he has suffered continuing pain.

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The Houston Metropolitan Baptist Church brought him to Houston, where a surgeon and a hospital donated hip surgery. The surgery means much more to the pastor than just relieving his pain.

"The first announcement that came over the radio was I'm dead, and the Muslims were very happy I was dead," said Pastor Zacariah Sserwadda.

The date was March 4, 2000. It was the third assassination attempt on Sserwadda in Uganda and the radio was reporting he was dead.

"My kids went into their room they were crying and praying," said Zacariah's wife, Robina.

Pastor Zacariah's car was hit intentionally in a head-on crash with a truck driven by Muslim extremists. He and a front seat passenger were seriously injured, but American missionary Anita Liebl was lying dead in the back seat. Liebl was on a visit to help in his ministry to Muslims.

"So when she left I said, "Lord, you have taken her away. It's up to you," said Pastor Zacariah.

He suffered a fractured pelvis, damage to both hips, broken ribs.

"The bone was out for 24 hours," he said.

The outspoken Christian pastor is a target in Uganda because he is actively converting Muslims to Christianity. His car has been sprayed with bullets and a man tried to put a bomb in his house.

"There are several mosques, they come together to plan for my assassination," he said.

The truck crash left him in pain for nine years. Two days ago, orthopedic surgeon Brian Parsley and Foundation Surgical Hospital gave the pastor a gift of hip replacement surgery.

"You're already on a cane the second day after surgery which is outstanding so I don't see any reason why you shouldn't walk normal," said Dr. Parsley.

Pastor Zacariah said, "Muslims have been ridiculing me saying even though you never died, we've crippled you with that limp because if that limp isn't going to be there I'm going to be a perfect person. It's very important."

He says he prays for his attackers.

"Jesus save them, save them," said Pastor Zacariah.

In Uganda, the pastor has come to be known as the "The Ghost," the preacher who can't be killed. He has helped start 400 churches in Uganda.

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