

NIGERIA:

NORTHERN CHRISTIANS WARY OF NEW MUSLIM PRESIDENT

Clerics unimpressed by Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, but his opponent was more hardline.

Christians fear that persecution especially in predominantly Islamic northern Nigeria will increase following the election on Saturday (21 Ap) of Muslim Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as president.

As governor of Katsina state in northern Nigeria, Yar'Adua imposed sharia (Islamic law) and presided over

a system of deliberate denial of land for building churches, as well as government agencies that arbitrarily closed some churches, Christian leaders told this correspondent.

Major political parties in Nigeria nominated only Muslims from the north as part of an unwritten agreement among leaders that the presidency would alternate between north and south.

The Rev. Bulus Polit of the Evangelical Church of West Africa in Jos told us that between the two Muslim presidential candidates, Yar'Adua's opponent was the more hard-line Muslim who would have presented greater problems to Christians in the country.