

## Lana, Ex- Christian, Romania



On July 30, 2006 / Rajab 4, 1427, with Allah's will, I declared my Shahadah.

I believe this is my destiny, to become a Muslim, to return to my true religion. My story is now in front of you to read!

There is not much to say about my religious background. I was baptized as a Christian Orthodox, yet I rarely entered a church or actually practiced the religion. In Romania, when I was little, religion was a taboo due to the strict Communist rules. Even when Communism fell, I was 11 at the time, many people returned to religion, but my parents continued to neglect it, and the country remained mainly secular.

The only time Mom would attend church was at a time of a wedding, a funeral, or a baptism of a child. Sometimes she used to take me along to church to light a candle for the dead and the living. Strangely, I never liked the smell of burning candles, nor the general "atmosphere" in an Orthodox Church.

In a typical Orthodox Church in my country there are no benches and when there was a sermon, people used to push to be closer to the altar. During the sermon, your legs would hurt so much, that you couldn't concentrate on the sermon anymore. In general, I never liked the sound of a sermon; elders used to gossip, it was crowded, and I never felt any religious "call" within Christianity.

Back home, two of my best friends were Muslims, yet not practicing ones. I used to attend a few Muslim weddings! It was an interesting experience. Then, during my university in the United Kingdom, I had classmates from all around the world and some were Muslims.

By coincidence, I was attracted to my Muslim classmate from Morocco and my other two from Indonesia, simply because they were calm, joyful, down-to-earth persons with interesting hobbies and never used to drinking like most of the students. Personally, I rarely drank alcohol; I can count on my fingers how many times I drank.

In my last months of my master's degree, I met, by pure coincidence, a wonderful Muslim man who would later become my husband. I reckon everyone reading this would say my conversion to Islam was because of my husband. On the contrary, I believe it was Allah's way and wish to bring this man into my life to guide me to the right path.

My husband never mentioned Islam and never raised the issue of me converting. I asked him once why he didn't talk about Islam, and he said he believed a person's religious choice should come from the heart, not convinced or forced by others. As long as I was one of the People of the Book [Christians and Jews], he was happy.

In the time when I was unsatisfied with the overall teachings of Christianity and especially the Orthodox branch of it, I still believed God existed. I was driven to Islam by the fact that its teachings gave me a sense of direction, a sense of belonging to something I originally felt in my heart. I didn't have any financial or sentimental problems. I just simply felt that Islam was what was missing in my life.

I was at the local Islamic center, in a building with a beautiful minaret, on the seaside, ever since I moved to Qatar (where I now live), I always admired the building; it's simply breathless to me. I thought it was only a mosque, but when later I found out it was actually an Islamic center with a Shari'ah court, I made a promise to myself that if or when I would ever take the Shahadah, it would be in that beautiful building. And Allah answered my wish.

On the morning of July 30, on the spur of the moment, I just took the car and stopped at the Islamic center and decided to take my Shahadah. My husband didn't know anything at all. He found out afterwards, when I invited him out in town to share with him the big news. He became speechless.

I can say my family-in-law's reaction took me by surprise. What I wanted to share with my husband went further to my father-in-law and the rest of the family. Happiness and tears of joy were a spontaneous reaction. As for my own parents, in sha' Allah, whenever I go back home, there will be a proper time for them to find out and they won't be upset.

I wish more and more people in my country would go beyond the biased mass media's view on Islam and start reading the Qur'an and understand the depth of this beautiful religion called Islam.

By Allah's will, people will stop finding illegal ways of making more and more money (sometimes at the expense of friendship and moral integrity) and they will stop fighting and there will be peace in the world. By Allah's will, people will start seeking, or will continue, their inner call to religious duty.