

# Adventists deny trying to convert Sarah Obama: Response to complaints from Kenyan Muslims

News in the [June 2, 2009](#) issue

Seventh-day Adventist leaders say there was no attempt to convert President Obama's step-grandmother, a Muslim, during an evangelistic event this spring in Kenya.

Muslim groups complained when church leaders invited Sarah Obama, 87, to the April 18 close of a three-week crusade in Kisumu, Kenya. An Adventist pastor, Tom Obuya, later told Kenya's *Daily Nation* newspaper that "Mama Sarah had assured us that she was converting, and we were ready to baptize her."

Sheikh Mohamed Khalifa, secretary of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya, said Muslims would not "sit and watch one of their own being coerced" to convert to Christianity.

Sarah Obama, who has become a local celebrity because of her step-grandson's White House win, is the third wife of Barack Obama's paternal grandfather.

After a recent meeting with Sarah Obama and local officials, a local church spokesperson said that there was never any attempt to baptize or convert her, and that reports of her conversion were "an exaggeration of the press."

"The position of the leadership of . . . the Seventh-day Adventist Church remains that Mama Sarah had only been invited to the meetings as a special guest . . . and that there were no intentions to baptize her," spokesperson Kenneth Maena said in a statement. "The church's stand is that baptism cannot be administered without the candidate's consent."

Maena added that a Seventh-day Adventist church located near Obama's home, which had changed its name to Obama Seventh-day Adventist Church, has reverted back to its original name, Nyangoma Seventh-day Adventist Church. -*Religion News*

*Service*