



Islamists Massacre More Nigerian Christians

The conflict in Nigeria between the government and Islamic terrorists has claimed its latest victims, with at least 10 people dead and five wounded. The growing problem of Islamic terrorism in Nigeria drew brief, worldwide attention when dozens were killed and at least 100 were injured in a series of Christmas Day attacks last year. The two most recent assaults once again targeted Christians, and raise questions about the ability of the government to successfully combat Islamist terrorism.

According to a report from AGI ("Nigerian Christian community attacked, at least 10 victims"), the latest violence took the form of two assaults on March 15 against Christians in the north-central state of Kaduna, by a large, well-armed group: "The commando unit which carried out the attacks comprised around twenty men who fired their automatic weapons in Dayi and Kauna, in the Chikun area." Their victims included a minister and a politician.



The most recent massacre highlights the nature of the ongoing crisis in Nigeria. The West African country is [almost evenly divided](#) between adherents of Islam and Christianity. Several regions of the country have a mixed population, but the population of the northern states is overwhelming Muslim, while the southern states are predominantly Christian. The population of Kaduna is divided between a majority of Muslims in the northern side and a majority of Christians in the southern side; when the state parliament [voted to impose a "limited form" of Sharia law](#) in 2000, the action was met by riots and President Olusegun Obasanjo denounced the imposition of Sharia as unconstitutional.

According to [a story from PMNews](#) in Nigeria, the victims of the two massacres in Kaduna were primarily members of the Assembly Church of God at Chikun:

The pastor of the Assembly Church of God at Chikun district of Chikun local government area of Kaduna State and no fewer than nine other persons, including four members of the church, have been killed by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen.

A member of the church who gave his name as Bulus Joseph told P.M.News this evening via phone that the attackers came early Friday and shot sporadically at houses around the church.

He said members residing around the church who tried to escape were either shot or macheted.

The attacks in Kaduna are the latest in a series that have taken place this year. Following the Christmas massacres, the Islamist terrorist organization Boko Haram has conducted a series of assaults. The name



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of the group sets forth its agenda: Boko Haram means “Western education is forbidden.” As noted [last December in an article for *The New American*](#), “Nigeria is, from the standpoint of Islam, a crucial battleground for the future is Islam, and the terrorists of Boko Haram desire to play a part in determining the war for the ‘hearts and minds’ of Nigeria; with at least 495 victims this past year throughout Nigeria, Boko Haram’s ‘war against the West’ is most certainly a war against their fellow Nigerians.” A [March 15 story for the BBC](#) confirms that this war against Christians is continuing unabated. With Boko Haram terrorists bombing churches and carrying out other attacks, thousands of Christians have fled the northern states. Churches been attacked and, according to the BBC, those who have gathered to mourn previous victims have found themselves targeted by the terrorists:

In early January in the north-eastern state of Adamawa, locals meeting to mourn fellow Christians killed the previous day were themselves targeted.

A man at the camp knew them well.

“It was terrible where they massacred up to 15 young men. They just came and shot them at head one by one. After seeing what they did, in fact I managed to evacuate all my property. That day was terrible,” he said.

Boko Haram is carrying out a campaign of violence which has the stated goal of driving Christians out of areas where Muslims make up the majority of the population. In January of this year, the Islamist organization issued an ultimatum, demanding that all Christians leave the north — or else.

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in four northern states, but his government has thus far failed to stop the violence. The Nigerian federal government even began negotiations with representatives of Boko Haram — only to have those representatives accuse the government of “insincerity” in its negotiations. As Emeka Mamah explained in an article for Vanguard (an online Nigerian news outlet), the Supreme Council for Shariah in Nigeria (SCSN) withdrew from the talks after accusing the government of leaking details of their discussions with members of the media. Mamah cited a lengthy statement from the president of the SCSN, Dr. Ibrahim Datti Ahmad, who declared, in part:

My delegation was well received and a high-ranking civilian officer was appointed immediately to liaise with us towards a successful resolution of the crisis. To our shock and dismay, no sooner had we started this dialogue, Nigerian newspapers came out with a lot of the details of the meeting held.

This development has embarrassed us very much and has created strong doubts in our minds about the sincerity of the government’s side in our discussion as the discussion is supposed to be very confidential to achieve any success.

In view of this unfortunate and unhelpful development, we have no option but to withdraw from these early discussions.

Embarrassment over leaks to the press hardly seems sufficient grounds for allowing the bloodshed to continue. According to Mamah, it is likely that the government’s unwillingness to release incarcerated leaders of Boko Haram was the actual cause for the withdrawal of the SCSN negotiators.

The reticence of Nigerian authorities to release such “top shots” is understandable, when one considers the apparently expanded role for al-Qaeda in building the strength and organization which was once relatively ineffectual. According to [a February 5 article for *The Telegraph*](#), foreign terrorists are making



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a critical difference in the coordination and lethality of Boko Haram's attacks:

In the past month... its gunmen or suicide bombers have struck 21 times, killing at least 253 people.

The Daily Telegraph understands this transformation has come about partly because of the help Boko Haram has received from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a branch of the international terrorist network based in the Saharan states of Mali, Niger and Algeria. Boko Haram demonstrated its new potency on Jan 20, when at least 100 of the movement's fighters executed eight assaults in Nigeria's northern city of Kano, overwhelming the security forces and killing 185 people.

This operation bore all the hallmarks of al-Qaeda: a mixture of suicide bombers and gunmen, some in police or army uniform, carried out multiple, carefully coordinated attacks on hard targets. ...

Boko Haram probably has little need for weapons or money as its fighters are accomplished bank robbers and whenever they raid a police station, they usually empty the armoury. AQIM's contribution is most likely to be in tactics and expertise, with Boko Haram fighters taken out of Nigeria for training.

Map above and below: Nigeria





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