



Nigerian Churches Bombed at Christmas

[According to initial press reports](#), 38 people were murdered in a series of bombings at Christian churches. Helen Kennedy reports for the *New York Daily News* that Nigerian Governor Jonah Jang is now calling it a “black Christmas”:



Meanwhile in Africa, seven blasts ripped through the restive Nigerian city of Jos, killing at least 31 people in a region riven by conflict between Christians and Muslims.

Officials said 74 people were hurt, many of them seriously.

Gov. Jonah Jang called it a “black Christmas.”

“When we should be celebrating peace, here we are crying,” he said.

Many of the dead were last-minute Christmas shoppers, or commuters caught in the cars by traffic jams caused by the first explosions.

Nigerian government official Choji Gyang said there was no claim of responsibility but Islamic fundamentalists are suspected of carrying out the attacks.

“For long, they have been threatening to use violence against Christians and free the region from the shackles of Western imperialism,” Gyang told CNN.

The government had recently started receiving letters purporting to be from Muslim organizations threatening attacks against Christians, Gyang said.

“The security officials didn’t take the threat letters seriously. They were thought of as gimmicks, and at the end of the day, they became reality,” he said.

Azubuike Ihejirika, the chief of Nigeria’s army, attempted to put some distance between the series of bombings and the nation’s ongoing strife between Christians and Muslims. [According to the New York Times](#), Ihejirika said of the bombings, “That is terrorism.... It’s a very unfortunate incident.”

One may justifiably wonder whether the bombing of mosques would be described as a “very unfortunate incident.” What is certain is that those who were killed in the bombings were Christians, targeted for their beliefs, in conjunction with one of the holiest days in the Christian calendar. In addition to the bombings in Jos, Nigeria, there were also two attacks on churches in Maiduguri, in northeastern Nigeria. A Baptist pastor and four other people were killed in one such attack, while a security guard at another church died in a similar attack.

The suffering of Christians at the hands of Islamic terrorists was met by expressions of sympathy and concern from church leaders. Pope Benedict XVI denounced the “absurd violence” against Christians in Nigeria and the Philippines:

“It was with great sadness that I learnt about the attack on a Catholic Church in the Philippines



Written by [James Heiser](#) on December 27, 2010

during the celebrations for Christmas and also against Christian churches in Nigeria,” the pope said.

“The earth is once again stained with blood as we have seen in other parts of the world,” Benedict added in his Angelus address at The Vatican, as he offered his condolences to the victims of the “absurd violence”.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, also called upon Anglicans to remember the plight of the persecuted church:

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams will say Christians who are suffering because of their beliefs would be helped through the knowledge they have not been forgotten.

“We may feel powerless to help; yet we should also know that people in such circumstances are strengthened simply by knowing they have not been forgotten,” Williams will say, according to extracts of the address released in advance.

“And if we find we have time to spare for joining in letter-writing campaigns for all prisoners of conscience, [rights groups] Amnesty International and Christian Solidarity worldwide will have plenty of opportunities for us to make use of.”

Delivering the sermon at the cathedral in Canterbury, he will cite a number of countries where Christians are suffering, including Iraq and Zimbabwe.

In Iraq, Christians are “facing more and more extreme violence from fanatics,” says Williams.

Photo of patients in Nigerian hospital following violence in Jos, Nigera, Dec. 25: AP Images



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