



"Christ died for our sins; now He has forgiven all our sins. He loves us. That's why we must show love to the people who hate us."

~ Habila Adamu, a Nigerian believer who was shot by a Boko Haram terrorist in 2012

NIGERIA: Ongoing Violence Leads to Church Closures

Sources: Morning Star News, International Christian Concern, ECSPE, Open Doors USA

Nigeria is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian. One estimate states that, on average, every two hours there is a Christian in Nigeria who dies. The ongoing brutality comes from numerous directions, and news reports only reflect a small portion of the violent incidents that take place – whether they involve fatalities, abductions or the destruction of properties. In many cases, multiple atrocities take place during a terrorist attack.

In addition to the physical effects of the violence, the psychological impacts on communities are extreme. Survivors often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety. Furthermore, the constant threat of attacks makes it very difficult for communities to rebuild and thrive.



Pastor Amos Mohzo
Photo: Morning Star News

In one recent incident, Islamic Fulani militants ambushed the village of Maiyanga in Plateau State on July 7th. Three Christians had been killed in the raid and two others were injured. During a previous attack in Plateau State that took place on June 2nd, Pastor Dauda Dalyop from the hamlet of Ari Songo was killed alongside his wife Chummy Dauda, in addition to three other slain victims: Chwe Ajuhs, Joshua Kusa and Rikwe Doro.

For one denomination, continued attacks have forced 70 churches to close in northeastern Nigeria. Pastor Amos Mohzo, who serves as president for the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), reported: "All our worship church buildings in these communities were burned down by terrorists. Christians are still living in camps outside their communities." According to Pastor Amos, while the church desires to continue reaching out to others with the Gospel message, the ongoing attacks are preventing their evangelistic activities. "How can we deliberately jeopardize and endanger the lives of those called to ministry when we know that they'll become targets of terrorist attacks?"

For Christians in Nigeria who suffer kidnappings, such attacks cause severe trauma and heartache to the victims, as well as those who love them. In March 2023, Pastor Paul Musa and his wife were kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists. Often, the militants behind these attacks make exorbitant ransom demands which are impossible to pay. Pastor Amos recently visited the children of the kidnapped couple, who pled on behalf of their parents. "The children are always crying...always in tears for their parents. It pains my heart to see these children in this way," he lamented.

In the midst of the pain, there are also occasions for joy. On July 7th, a Roman Catholic priest, Mikah Suleiman, was safely released from captivity. No details have been announced concerning the identities of his kidnappers nor the terms for his release. In a video-recorded message released shortly after Father Mikah's homecoming, the priest said: "I want to thank you for your prayers and support towards my rescue. By the grace of God, I'm out from the hands of the bandits."

With the ongoing trauma experienced by our Nigerian family in Christ – along with the constant risk of further attacks – church leaders in the country are seeking ways to effectively help their congregations. Recently, VOMC's Greg Musselman travelled to Nigeria, along with one of our credible ministry partners, to present the *Theology of Persecution and Discipleship* course to pastors in affected areas. You may view the June 2024 *Closer to the Fire* podcast episode to hear about this training opportunity at [this page](#). To read more about the violence committed against Christians in Nigeria, and to access other informative video reports, see our [country profile](#).

Please prayerfully uphold all those who have been affected by the ongoing violence in Nigeria. For those mourning the loss of their loved ones, may God's Spirit bring greatly needed comfort. For those who have been kidnapped, pray that they will be safely released from captivity. In the meantime, may the captives and their anxious family members be filled with God's peace which is beyond all comprehension (Philippians 4:7). Also intercede for the many followers of Jesus who have lost their homes, businesses and churches in the destruction. Despite the violence, may the Gospel message of eternal life spread throughout communities across Nigeria, bringing peace, hope and harmony to this beleaguered nation.

INDONESIA: Church Threatened with Eviction

Source: International Christian Concern

Local authorities have threatened to evict a church in West Java because of its proximity to the Indonesian International Islamic University, despite the church having met previously in that location for nine years. The HKI Juanda Church in Depok, which consists of more than 150 members, is located on the edge of cultivated land. However, since the university was founded in September 2021, it has taken over the property of the neighbouring land.

Hearings are currently being held with officials from the university and the government to determine the fate of the church. At last report, no decision has yet been made. Reflecting on the situation, an elder from the church proclaimed: "We aspire to remain here despite our lack of power. With the collective prayers of our friends, we hold onto hope." For more reports about Christian persecution in Indonesia, go to our [country profile](#).



A church in Indonesia.
Photo: VOMC

As negotiations over the land dispute continue to take place, pray that God will intervene in the ongoing hearings so that a peaceful, amicable solution will be attained. In the midst of this difficult situation, may the members of the HKI Juanda Church serve as effective testimonies of the Lord's love, peace and saving grace to the opposing university officials. In general, please pray on behalf of all churches throughout Indonesia that are encountering various challenges due to opposition from their local authorities, asking God to grant the leaders and members of these congregations needed wisdom, guidance and strength.

UZBEKISTAN: Proposed Law Introduces New Punishments for Religious Education

Source: Forum18

A draft law, which is purported to "further strengthen the rights of children," recently passed its first reading in Uzbek parliament. However, the proposed legislation seeks to punish parents or guardians who allow their children to receive "illegal" religious education before reaching the age of 18.

Religious education already faces several restrictions in Uzbekistan, but existing laws presently only target those who teach religion to children. Under the new law, however, parents would be subjected to fines and up to 15 days in jail for allowing such teaching. The government's Interior Ministry claims that the legislation aims to prevent children from falling under the influence of terrorist groups.



Children in Uzbekistan.
Photo: Flickr / eatswords (cc)

On June 26th, the Legislative Chamber published the draft law on its website. The posting has led to strong opposition from members of the public. One commenter stated, "What kind of parents...do not give religious education to their children?" A social media post by another concerned individual questioned the government's methodology: "What we found is that religious radicalism and fanaticism are on the rise. If [they are] on the rise, shouldn't religion be taught more deeply? Can bans work?"

While the law is publicly being promoted as a means of restricting militant Islamic training, it's evident that the repercussions of the new proposed law will affect all faith groups. Many Uzbek citizens have expressed concerns that their right to 'freedom of religion or belief' will be further restricted as a result. More details on the challenges facing Christians in Uzbekistan are available at our [country report](#).

Pray that the governing leaders of Uzbekistan will come to fully respect the religious rights of all citizens. Ask our Heavenly Father to work powerfully in the hearts and minds of the country's legislators so that this proposed law will either not be passed or that it will be amended to allow parents to continue providing religious instruction to their children. May the youth throughout this Central Asian nation have opportunities to hear the message of God's saving grace and, as a result, become instrumental in leading many others to faith in Christ as well.

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