



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"For someone to come to see
what I am passing through, I feel that
some people have concern for me....
I feel secure, and I feel loved."
~ Pastor Gah Yohanna Sunday
of Jabu Village, Plateau State*

NIGERIA: At Least 140 Fatalities Due to Christmas Attacks

Sources: Catholic News Agency, Morning Star News, VOM USA, Christianity Today, Pilot News

The Christmas season was anything but peaceful for Christians in Plateau State, Nigeria, this past December. Approximately 20 Christian-majority communities were targeted during a series of coordinated attacks committed by Islamic Fulani militants on December 23rd through to the 25th. By the time the assailants left after causing widespread devastation, hundreds of homes were burned, along with eight church buildings. Thousands of innocent villagers were displaced and/or injured, and more than 140 people were killed, including two pastors.

The ordeal has been referred to as the worst attack on Christians in the area since 2018. Bishop Matthew Kukah has called on the newly elected Nigerian president to take immediate action. In his address, the bishop emphasized his concern that "Nigerians have almost lost hope" in the government's promises of intervention.

Various reasons have been speculated for the ongoing attacks of Christian persecution perpetrated by militant Fulani groups. In response to the latest outbreak of violence, Gideon Para-Mallam, a Nigerian church leader, stated: "A terrible genocide is taking place in Plateau State, but it is being window-dressed to look like a clash between farmers and herders. Sadly, false and misleading narratives are created while rivers of blood continue to flow."

In a separate attack that took place in the eastern state of Adamawa, a group of assailants, believed to be members of Boko Haram or a faction of Islamic State West Africa Province

(ISWAP), raided the village of Kwapre on Christmas Day. Houses had been set on fire, shops were looted, and two Christians ended up tragically killed. The attackers then fled on their motorcycles into the Sambisa forest, which has been a key Boko Haram hideout for years.

An extensive podcast report, in which host Greg Musselman interviews Andrew Boyd of Release International, has just been released. During their discussion on the persecution trends for 2024, they address the Plateau State's recently occurring attacks in light of the ongoing challenges facing Christians in Nigeria. To view this informative video, go to www.vomcanada.com/ri2024.

Please pray for the thousands of innocent Nigerians who were impacted by this most recent series of devastating attacks. Ask the Lord to minister healing to the injured victims and provide greatly needed comfort to those who are now mourning the tragic loss of their loved ones. Pray that He will also minister to the spiritual and practical needs of the many displaced believers who've lost their homes and/or livelihoods due to the violence. In the process, may God grant wisdom and guidance to the country's political and spiritual leaders, providing them effective strategies that will prevent further attacks from taking place against our Nigerian family in Christ and the unnecessary bloodshed of so many innocent lives.

EGYPT: Attack on Church Building Site

Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Since 2016, the government of Egypt has been slowly approving the registration of more than 3,700 church buildings that were operating without the required licencing. These buildings were established before 2016, during a time when permits were virtually impossible to get. Although the licencing process now being administered has been long and tedious, thankfully progress is eventually taking place.

For a Coptic community in the village of Al-Azeeb, the process of attaining a safe place to worship has become even more difficult due to the opposition of hostile neighbours. After obtaining the necessary permits from the government to construct a church building, this congregation began excavating the property in preparation for the laying of the foundation. On the evening of December 18th, however, militant members of the Muslim community in their village, as well as those from the surrounding area, converged on the building site. Along with physically attacking the workers who were present, the mob threw stones and Molotov cocktails at the Christians' homes and livestock – all the while, clashing with police officers who were working to mitigate the attacks.

While local police and security forces are continuing in their search for culprits of the attack, followers of Jesus in the community are fearful of further violence. For more information on the challenges experienced by Egyptian Christians, go to www.vomcanada.com/egypt.htm.

In the aftermath of this recently occurring incident of persecution, ask God to mightily intervene on behalf of the Christians in Al-Azeeb by ministering His peace, protection, comfort and encouragement. Pray that those responsible for the attack will not only be held accountable for their destructive actions, but that they would also experience the Holy Spirit's

conviction for their volatile hostility towards fellow members of the community – in hopes of them turning to Christ with sincere repentance. Finally, pray that relational reconciliation and harmony would become more evident among the diverse peoples of this community and those in other areas of Egypt.

REPORT UPDATE

PHILIPPINES: Christmas Celebrations Curtailed After Bombing

Sources: Christianity Today, Agenzia Fides

On December 3rd, a Catholic mass held at Mindanao State University was rocked by a bomb that killed four participants and wounded 45 others. (More details about this incident are available at www.vomcanada.com/vomc-christmas-2023-12-21.htm.) Following the bombing, which was carried out by ISIS-affiliated terrorists, the church deemed it necessary to scale back on their upcoming Christmas celebrations.

As a result of the attack, the church cancelled a number of traditional celebratory events leading up to Christmas Eve, and members of the armed forces were brought into the university to protect those attending the services that had resumed. In the aftermath of the assault, the bishop of Marawi stated: "The attack has caused disbelief, emotion and great pain in everyone, Christians and Muslims.... There is much fear now, but faith accompanies us and gives us support. Even in this time of distress, we feel the presence of the Lord."

At last report, police had arrested one of the suspects, though the man who planted the explosive device was still at large. For further information on the challenges encountered by Christians in the Philippines, particularly due to the opposition of militant Islamic groups operating in parts of the country, go to www.vomcanada.com/philippines.htm.

Pray that God's perfect peace will rest on each of the believers who were affected by this fatal bombing. May the authorities capture those responsible for the attack and take necessary measures to protect the members of this church and any others that may be at risk in the community. Continue to intercede for the citizens of this Southeast Asian nation in general, praying that the Gospel message of God's love, healing and deliverance will continue touching the hearts of people residing on the various islands of the Philippines, leading many more to salvation through faith in Christ.

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