

2012: Boko Haram's Bloodiest Christian Persecution Campaign

Boko Haram, a Nigerian militant Islamist group, had their bloodiest year in 2012, responsible for more than 750 deaths.

General Aziza, Nigeria's former national security advisor, says the upscale in Boko Haram's **terrorist attacks** may be linked with the upcoming 2015 Nigerian presidential elections.

When President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, was elected president of Nigeria in 2011, a series of Boko Haram killings followed. Boko Haram made threats on the president to resign or else turn Nigeria into an Islamic nation.

Rae Burnett, the Africa Director for Christian Aid Mission, explains, "I do believe that it's **spiritual warfare**, but it's definitely the desire to see that Islam is the world religion. They start where they are, and these guys are Nigerian, so they want to be empowered in Nigeria."

Several of the Muslim-majority Northern states began declaring themselves under **shariah law** after the 2011 elections. Of the 32 Nigerian states, 12 currently are govern by Islamic shariah law. 2015 will be Muslims' next chance to gain power in Nigeria's political arena.

However, Boko Haram grew quiet on the large-scale attack front earlier this month. The fact that Christmas was approaching—the biggest Christian holiday of the year—wasn't lost on anyone and created an eerie silence. Attacks were expected, especially since Boko Haram has declared intent to eradicate Christians from Nigeria.

And **Boko Haram militants** have the means to back up this

desire. With ties to Al-Qaeda and funding for weapons, they fight in pockets and avoid any clashes with the Nigerian military. They've gotten bolder. According to Burnett, "They do whatever is in front of them. If it's a school bus, they'll blow it up. If it's a school, they'll blow it up. They're trying to make people afraid."

Because of the disjointed nature of Boko Haram's fighting tactics, several smaller attacks still occur weekly in Northern Nigeria, but they are largely unreported.

Burnett shares, "Once, I read [about another attack] and called my friend [in Nigeria] and said, 'Why didn't you tell me about this?' He said, 'Look, if I tell you about every terrorist attack, we would be on the phone all the time.' They've become so common place that they are happening every day. We don't hear about them."

The attacks have gotten so bad in the state where Christian Aid's headquarters are located that they need to move to a safer site. But Christian Aid can't do it without the funds. Out of the \$40,000 needed, they only have \$10,000—enough to buy the land and lay a foundation. Christian Aid still needs \$30,000 to finish the headquarter buildings and residences.

"They really need to move from the state where they are now," says Burnett. "Two and three times a week, they are suffering terrorist attacks."

But despite the danger, the 120 missionaries in Nigeria associated with Christian Aid are staying in the ministry field. "They are committed to making the Lord known and dying for Him if need be," says Burnett. "They're doing wonderful work, and many people are coming to Christ."