

30 Christians Killed in New Year's Eve Massacres

Thirty people were killed in two separate attacks carried out by armed men ahead of the New Year, in northeastern Nigeria.

Fifteen people were killed in a single attack which occurred on Dec. 30, when armed men stormed a church service in Kyachi village, outside Chibok, near Maiduguri. According to Mohammed Kanar, the regional coordinator for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the victims were shot by the attackers.

"We received information from our personnel in Chibok that some attackers stormed a church during Sunday service, and killed 15 people," he told Agence France Presse.

This attack followed another massacre on Dec. 29 in which 15 people were killed in the night in Musari, also near Maiduguri.

"From the information we gathered, the attackers broke into selected homes and slaughtered 15 people in their sleep," said a relief official to AFP.

"The victims were selected because they were all Christians, some of whom had moved into the neighbourhood from other parts of the city hit by Boko Haram attacks," the relief worker added.

Climate of Fear

In a previous attack, as WWM reported, six Christians including the **pastor** were killed by gunmen during a Christmas Eve service in a church in north-eastern Yobe state. For many Christians, these latest killings are a reminder of the 2011 Christmas season, the bloodiest in Nigeria, when attacks on churches and other locations left scores of people dead.

In response to 2011's violence, the Nigerian President **Goodluck Jonathan** had declared a state of emergency in many northern areas, which are mostly affected by Boko Haram attacks, the Islamist militants. Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State, in the North-east, is seen as the headquarters of Boko Haram militants.

Since 2009, the **Islamist group** has been engaged in violent actions aimed at imposing **Islamic law** in the country. In the beginning, **Boko Haram** had been targeting Muslims and symbols of Nigerian government, but the group expanded its attacks on Christians, with armed men carrying out attacks on churches and Christians in North and Central Nigeria. The recurrence of violence has forced thousands of Christian families to seek refuge in other safer areas of the country, particularly in the South which is predominantly Christian.

Many analysts think that the deployment of the Joint Force Task (JTF), a special unit, in the most-hit areas has failed to eradicate the phenomenon of Islamist insurgency. The government's response is often seen as controversial as the army is being accused of committing atrocities against innocent people, an accusation it strongly denies.