

About 200 Christians Murdered in Heinous Killing Spree

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In a 60-hour killing spree that began last weekend, about 200 Christians were slaughtered in Plateau State even as the U.S. ambassador at large for international religious freedom was departing Nigeria.

Ambassador Sam Brownback's one-week visit was pockmarked with six suicide bombings by Boko Haram in one day (the largest single day detonations), deadly Shiite clashes with the police, altercations between local Muslims and a community, and continuing killings by Muslim Fulani Herdsmen.

The grand finale of this perfect storm of violence was the triple-digit massacre in Plateau State.

Overnight, I have been inundated with photos too gruesome to share here of horribly mutilated bodies of children hacked to death and even after death for maximal horror effect, charred corpses and bodies stacked in mass graves.

Already the Fulani have justified this heinous crime against humanity.

The sad thing is this is not the first time, nor will it be the last. In 2012 when Fulani massacred over 60 Christian villagers in Plateau State, an executive of the same cattle-rearing group said the same thing.

I wrote to the attorney general and asked, "This man has admitted the crime. Why hasn't he been picked up?"

He is still free till today. After the New Year massacre in Benue State, again they admitted it. No one has been arrested.

Worse still, some of the communities attacked this weekend were attacked previously. One community was part of the notorious 2010 Dogo Na Hawa Massacre in which 500 Christians were killed.

That massacre eight years ago spurred me to launch the Justice For Jos project that has evolved to covering Boko Haram atrocities. Ironically, the Herdsmen atrocities have continued unabated while Boko Haram hogged the spotlight.

Sadly, all of this occurred while Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari was busy holding a party convention in his bid for re-election.

Early last week, I received distress messages from of our local workers that he was trapped outside the orphanage because of an ongoing Herdsmen attack. At the same time, Buhari deployed over 5,000 policemen for his security at the party convention, and the massacre occurred full force, despite the early warnings.

We hear reports that authorities have ordered mass burials to hide the true casualties.

At this point, the Plateau massacre this weekend appears to be the third worst in the eight years in which I have tracked Herdsmen attacks.

1. Dogo Nahawa–500 killed in March 2010–Plateau State
2. Agatu–300 killed in February 2016–Benue State
3. Barkin Ladi–about 200 killed in Plateau State–June 2018

It is disconcerting that a small Muslim minority can so terrorize Christian majorities in Benue and Plateau state because of their monopoly of violence.

The great danger is if Christians choose not to take it anymore. Friends and family have been appealing for evacuation

as Muslims amass. However, Plateau is where most Christians from the far north flee for safety, so where will everyone one now go?

One of my learned colleagues informs me that rocket propelled grenades were used in these attacks. I am waiting on the evidence, but if true, this is not the first time either.

I will keep you updated while I ask your prayers for this unraveling situation. {eo}

Emmanuel Ogebe *founded the Justice for Jos Project in Washington, D.C.*

This article originally appeared on Assist News Service.