

Assault on Christians Intensifies in Tanzania

Christians in Tanzania have lost churches, homes, cars and livestock in a series of recent attacks, and some have received physical injuries. In the most recent attack, Muslims returning from worship at a mosque on Friday, Oct. 12, burned a car belonging to Bishop Muhiche of the Tanzania Assemblies of God church. After burning his car, the extremists moved on to destroy the pastor's church.

"Police had to intervene, but it was too late," a VOM contact said. "They had to use a helicopter to help some Christians escape the attacks. When I went there, we were confronted by the police using tear-gas bombs to scatter the attackers." Muslims tried to keep the incident quiet by confiscating journalists' video cameras, but the news was still broadcast on all the local television stations.

That same day, in Ushirombo District of Shinyanga Region, Muslim extremists attacked the Reverend Victor Simbaulanga. Enraged by an open-air evangelistic meeting the pastor was leading, the attackers beat Simbaulanga so severely that he had to be hospitalized. A VOM contact is working to have the pastor transferred to a hospital in a safer area so he won't be attacked again.

On Sept. 28, Muslim extremists in Tunduru District of Ruvuma Region attacked a Christian medical doctor, Vitalis Lusasi, while he was in his car. They smashed the car's windows and attempted to burn the vehicle before onlookers intervened.

Less than two weeks earlier, on Sept. 17, Muslim extremists reportedly attacked Christians in the same region, burning 60 pigs and attempting to burn six houses. Bystanders helped save five of the houses, but one was destroyed. A few nights later,

two Christians' cars, one belonging to a pastor, were set on fire in the same area.

"No one has been arrested so far in connection with all these wild attacks, probably because 85 percent of the residents of Tunduru are staunch Muslims," said a VOM contact. He said some of those who have been attacked are traumatized and won't talk about their current situation, fearing future attacks. "We really do not know what is going on," said the VOM contact. "We need your constant, intensive prayers."