

Christian Woman Killed in Nigeria's Kaduna State

A Muslim villager in Kaduna state allegedly helped Fulani herdsmen and other Muslims from nearby Kafanchan to ambush a Christian settlement, resulting in the death of one woman and gunshot wounds to two other Christians on Dec. 10, area sources said.

Musa Blak, 60, told Compass how gunmen lurking behind trees outside his home killed his wife, Kunam Musa Blak, and wounded him and his cousin, 48-year-old Monday Blai Yayok, after a schoolteacher in Kukum Gida village allegedly helped Muslims survey the site. Kunam Musa Blak was 50.

In the Jankassa ward of Kukum Gida village, a Christian settlement of 425 people who all attend the local Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Musa Blak and his family were asleep when they were awakened by the sound of barking dogs at 11:45 p.m., he said.

"I decided to go outside and find out what was happening," Blak said. "While outside, I noticed a dark figure standing behind some cactus trees near my house. I neither moved nor said anything, but kept watching to see what this figure would do."

Hidden behind the trees were Muslim gunmen who had taken positions around the village with the intent of ambushing villagers, he said.

"A few minutes afterwards, the figure moved away quietly, and at this point my wife too came out of the room and met me outside, asking whether I had found anything," he said. "I then told her about the figure I saw that moved away."

As he spoke to her, suddenly he heard a gunshot and saw his

wife go down.

"I heard the sound of a gunshot, and suddenly I heard my wife crying as she fell to the ground. I tried reaching to hold her when I too was hit by a bullet," Blak said. "I still struggled by crawling to the place my wife was lying on the ground and held her in my arms even as I was bleeding."

Awakened villagers trooped out of their houses, he said, and as his cousin, Yayok, stepped out of Blak's house, he also was shot.

With other villagers streaming out and soldiers stationed at nearby Kagoro, the assailants must have sensed that it would be difficult to overrun the village and withdrew, he said; by the time military personnel received information about the invasion and rushed over, the gunmen had left.

The soldiers transported him, his cousin and his wife's body to Kafanchan General Hospital, and then Blak and Yayok were referred to Bingham University Teaching Hospital in Jos; there Musa had his bullet wounds treated, and Yayok underwent surgery on Dec. 12.

"We believe that Muslim Fulani herdsmen who once lived near our village, with the support of Muslims from Kafanchan, were the ones who attacked us," Blak said.

Jonah Bayina, the 43-year-old head of the village ward, identified the Muslim schoolteacher suspected of helping to lead the gunmen to the site in Kaduna state, which has been wracked by several attacks on Christians the past few months.

"Isa Damu, a Fulani Muslim who teaches in one public school here, is the one who led his fellow Muslims to attack us," Bayina told Compass. "On Tuesday, Dec. 6, he brought some Muslims to the village, and they stayed with him until they left on Friday, Dec. 9, and then they launched the attack on us the following day. We believe he brought the Muslims to

enable them to survey our village before attacking us.”

Damu disappeared on the night of the attack, and he has not been seen since, he said.

“His head teacher phoned him, and they spoke, but Damu refused to disclose where he was, nor gave any reasons for absconding from his teaching post,” Bayina said.

A member of ECWA church in Kukum Gida, Bayina said this was the first attack on the Christian settlement, which lies at the bottom of a cliff face rising 50 meters, less than two kilometers from the Kagoro ECWA Theological Seminary.

“Even though this is the first attack on our community, we are now living in fear and uncertainty as regards our safety,” he said. “The incident has now forced us to keep watch over the village at night, as even a day after the attack, that is, on the night of Sunday, Dec. 11, the attackers returned again to attack us, but through resilience and courage and with the help of soldiers who rushed in from Kagoro, we were able to repel the Muslim attackers.”

Blak said that in spite of the murder of his wife, he has been praying for the assailants.

“I have been praying that these Muslims who attack us come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior, too,” he said. “I have forgiven them, because I know they do not know what they are doing.”

He urged Christians to pray for those persecuting them.

“Jesus Christ also did the same while on the cross,” he said.