

Death Toll Climbs in Islamist Attacks in Nigeria's Northeast

The number of Christians killed in an **Islamic extremist attack** in Nigeria on Jan. 5 has risen to nine, and over the weekend the same terrorist group killed at least 21 Christians in neighboring Adamawa state, sources said.

Members of the Boko Haram group that seeks to impose sharia (**Islamic law**) on Nigeria emerged from a mosque near the Deeper Life Bible Church in the Boso area of Gombe, capital of Gombe state, at about 7:30 p.m. and shot Christians attending a weekly meeting known as "**The Hour of Revival**," area sources said.

Silas Ugboeze, who was in a coma for three days at the Federal Medical Centre in Gombe, died 20 minutes after Compass arrived on Jan. 7, bringing the death toll to nine and the list of those wounded in the attack to 19.

Ugboeze's son Gideon was also killed, and his 12-year-old daughter, Victoria Silas Ugboeze, was wounded in both breasts. She has thus far survived along with her brother Daniel, who was also shot.

Ugboeze's widow was overcome with grief at the hospital, able to say only, "Lord, where are you? This burden is too much for me to bear."

Of the nine killed, five died instantly and four died later at the hospital. About 45 people were present at the service when it was attacked, said the church's 43-year-old pastor, Sunday Okoli.

The Gombe Deeper Life Bible Church, planted more than 20 year

years ago, is adjacent to a mosque built less than two meters from its northern end, and it was from this mosque that the gunmen emerged to attack the church, said Okoli, based on reports he received from those present as he was away at a pastors' conference in Lagos at the time.

His wife, Chinyere Okoli, said a bullet struck her head but left only a light wound with bruising.

"We had been in the church for about one hour and 30 minutes praying, when suddenly, we heard gunshots and bullets hitting us," she said. "Oh my God, blood was flowing as our members were shot by the gunmen."

She reported that the wife of church elder Chenma Ngwaba, Chilver Chenma, and their son, Chinedu Chenma, were both killed. Elder Ngwaba was leading the evening program, at which members customarily share spiritual and physical burdens for prayer purposes and testify to God's work in their lives.

Others killed were Johnson Jauro, whose two sons were also wounded; Sule Baba Tanko; Godwin Odoh; Menshak Major; and a member of the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) serving in the church. His name was not immediately known, but leaders of the church were trying to establish his identity.

As Compass visited the emergency and orthopedic wards of the Federal Medical Centre in Gombe, the injured members of the church were in severe pain with varying degrees of injuries.

The attacks marked the second time in less than a month that the Deeper Life Bible Church in Gombe was mourning the killing of one of its members. On Dec. 11, Patrick Ugoji was shot dead by Muslim militants at a gas station, the NNPC Mega Station, while filling his car's tank.

Many Christians were seen at motorparks boarding vehicles to leave town.

Weekend Killings

Boko Haram had published an ultimatum in a newspaper on Jan. 3 threatening violence if Christians did not leave predominantly Muslim northern Nigeria in three days. Since then, the group has reportedly claimed responsibility for killing at least 44 people in four states.

Christians in Adamawa state came under attack by Boko Haram, which in the Hausa language means “Western education is sacrilege,” over the weekend. On Jan. 6, 11 people were killed and many others injured at the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in the Nasarawa area of Yola, the state capital.

“There was blood all over the church hall—it was a very sorry sight,” Adamawa journalist Barnabas Manyan told Compass.

Pastor Alfred Anoris of the CAC described how the Islamists attacked the church.

“The gunmen numbering about six stormed the church, killing three people outside the gate, and eight people inside, including Associate Pastor Joshua Olaniyi, while the service was on,” he told newsmen. “The men were dressed in caftans but had their faces covered. They carried out the act with the precision and tact of professional killers. Many people were wounded and are in the hospital.”

Earlier on Friday, 12 persons were reportedly killed when armed men claimed by **Boko Haram** shot a gathering of Christian traders holding a **prayer** session before opening their shops in Mubi, Adamawa. The gunmen also shot at another group of Christians meeting at a town hall to arrange for the transportation of relatives slain the previous day, bringing the total of those killed in Mubi to 21.

Also on Jan. 7, Boko Haram members reportedly killed two Christian students of the University of Maiduguri, in Maiduguri, Borno state.

The public relations officer of the State Police Command, Altine Daniel, confirmed the incidents and told newsmen that there was a bomb explosion at a Deeper Life Church in Mubi, but that no one was injured.

Ayo Oritsejafor, head of the Christian Association of Nigeria, said Christian leaders had decided to “work out means to defend ourselves against these senseless killings.”

“We have the legitimate right to defend ourselves,” he said. “We will do whatever it takes.”