

Explosion at Christian Revival in Kenya Kills Two

An 8-year-old boy died on Tuesday from injuries after suspected **Islamic extremists** on March 31 threw a grenade into a **Christian revival** meeting near Kenya's coastal town of Mombasa that instantly killed a woman and injured at least 30 people.

Kenyan Internal Security Minister George Saitoti said Islamic extremists from the rebel al Shabaab militia in Somalia were suspected of carrying out the deadly blast, although the group has not claimed responsibility. The government, which began military operations against al Shabaab in Somalia last October, today issued a warning of a possible attack by al Shabaab during Easter celebrations in Kenya this weekend.

The names of the boy and the woman who died after the suspected Islamic extremist threw a grenade into the open air meeting in Mtwapa have not been released.

Christians in coastal areas of Kenya were gripped with fear after the attack, which took place between 7 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., according to an eyewitness. The meeting, organized by the Mtwapa Pastors' Fellowship, brought together 500 Christians from 16 denominations at the Kandara event site in Kilifi County, 16 kilometers (10 miles) from Mombasa. It began on Friday and would have continued through Sunday were it not for the attack.

"Someone inside a moving Nissan vehicle threw a hand grenade towards the podium where the **preaching pastor**, the Rev. Daniel Mwendwa of the Miracle in the Village Church, was ministering, and there was a group of singers close by," said eyewitness Harrison Tembo Chome, pastor of the Holy Jerusalem Church. "Everything came to a standstill. There was wailing and

immediately the police, the army and ambulances arrived.”

More than 30 people were seriously injured, mostly singers leading worship, he said.

Three people have been arrested in relation to the explosion, but it was not clear what relation they had with al Shabaab, if any.

“What we as the church are almost certain of at the moment is that the incident seemed to be a religious fight against Christians,” said another pastor who asked to remain unnamed.

About 300 meters from the **Christian evangelistic meeting**, a Muslim gathering near Kipingo Pharmacy Road took place throughout the week and continued during and after the blast, Christian sources said.

“Why were only the Christians affected and not the Muslim gathering, which had been going on for a longer period of time?” said one Christian. “On Sunday we the Christians could not continue with our meeting, but the Muslims continued. Why did they continue when they knew that such a terrible incident had happened close to where they were holding their religious meeting?”

A police investigation is continuing.

The attack comes after attacks and kidnappings in the area and elsewhere last year prompted the Kenyan military to strike at al Shabaab targets in Somalia. At press time Kenyan soldiers were moving towards Kismayo, an al Shabaab stronghold not far from Mombasa.

With estimates of al Shabaab’s size ranging from 3,000 to 7,000, the insurgents seek to impose a strict version of *sharia* (Islamic law) on Somalia, but the government in Mogadishu fighting to retain control of the country treats Christians little better than the al Shabaab extremists do.

While proclaiming himself a moderate, President Sheikh Sharif Sheik Ahmed has embraced a version of sharia that mandates the death penalty for those who leave Islam.