

Fifteen Christians Have Throats Slit by Boko Haram Extremists in Northern Nigeria

At least 15 Christians were killed by suspected **Boko Haram** militants in northern Nigeria. The militants snuck into Musari, a neighborhood located on the outskirts of Maiduguri, early on Friday morning and slit the throats of fifteen Christians in their own homes, according to International Christian Concern (ICC).

The militants specifically targeted Christians because they broke into only Christian homes located in an area of Musari that is predominantly Christian. "The attackers came in and silently went into homes whose residents were all Christians and slit the throats of their victims. They killed fifteen people," a resident told the press.

According to Nigerian military officials, the death toll only stands at five. Residents of Musari and other relief organizations put the number at fifteen. The Nigerian authorities often under-report the casualties in Boko Haram attacks.

A relief official told AFP "the victims were selected because they were all Christians, some of whom had moved into the neighborhood from other parts of [Maiduguri] hit by Boko Haram attacks." According to residents, many Christians have moved into the Musari neighborhood because of the many bombings and shootings perpetrated by Boko Haram in other parts of Maiduguri.

Boko Haram is an **Islamic extremist group** that is currently fighting the Nigerian government for control of northern

Nigeria. Boko Haram desires to establish a separate Islamic state in Nigeria's northern states where it can enact an ultra conservative interpretation of **shariah law**. Since beginning its armed insurgency in 2009, Boko Haram has killed over 3,000 people in Nigeria. Christians have often been the victims of violence perpetrated by Boko Haram. In early 2012, Boko Haram leaders demanded all Christians to leave northern Nigeria so that the group could begin establishing its purely Islamic society.

Since then, **Boko Haram** has been responsible for a series of church bombings, drive-by shootings and Christian pogroms across northern Nigeria.

This most recent attack comes on the heels of two very similar attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram on Christmas Eve. In the Christmas Eve attacks, twelve Christians in separate cities were killed by gunmen suspected to be connected with Boko Haram and two churches were burned down. Although this Christmas season has been less violent than 2011, the Christians of northern Nigeria continue to live in a constant state of fear.

"Christians living in Nigeria's northern regions continue to be targeted by Boko Haram. These attacks are meant to terrorize the Christian community that continues to live in northern Nigeria. Earlier this year, Boko Haram demanded all Christians leave Nigeria's North. Since then, the group has continued to wage a campaign of terror against those Christians who decided to stay," ICC's Regional Manager for Africa, William Stark.

"The United States is still deciding whether to designate Boko Haram a Foreign Terrorist Organization, which if given, would allow the US to seize Boko Haram's assets under US jurisdiction. This would help stem the flow of arms and funds the group receives from sources outside Nigeria's borders. The consistency of these attacks shows Nigeria's government is

struggling to deal with the violence that has dominated its northern states since international community must take decisive action.”