

Muslims Attack Worship Service in Uganda

✖ About 40 Muslim extremists with machetes and clubs tried to break into a Sunday worship service outside Uganda's capital city of Kampala on Nov. 1, leaving a member of the congregation with several injuries and damaging the church building.

Eyewitnesses said the extremist mob tried to storm into World Possessor's Church International in Namasuba at 11 a.m. as the church worshipped.

(Photo: Compass Direct News)

"The church members were taken by a big surprise, as this happened during worship time," said Pastor Henry Zaake. "It began with an unusual noise coming from outside, and soon I saw the bricks falling away one by one. Immediately I knew that it was an attack from the Muslims who had earlier sent signals of an imminent attack."

The pastor said the disturbance brought the worship service to a standstill.

"There was a tug-of-war at the entrance to the church as members tried to thwart the Muslim aggression from making headway inside the church," he told Compass.

A member of the congregation who was taking photos of the worship service—and then the attack—was beaten, sustaining several injuries, church leaders said. He was later taken to a nearby clinic for treatment. During the pandemonium, some church members were able to escape through a rear door.

Pastor Umar Mulinde added that nearby residents helped repel the attack.

"At the scene of the incident were rowdy Muslims with machetes and clubs ready to destroy the church," Pastor Mulinde said. "The good neighbors of the church also came in, and we were able to overpower [the assailants]."

Police arrived and put a stop to the assault, but officers did not arrest anyone, church leaders said.

"We have reported the matter to the central police station, and we are surprised that no action has been taken," Pastor Zaake said. "So far no person has been arrested as a result of this mayhem. It is as if the police are not concerned about our security and lives."

Many in the church are now living in fear, he said, noting that last Sunday (Nov. 8), attendance decreased from 250 to 100 people.

"Since the attack we have been receiving a lot of threats from the Muslims," Pastor Zaake said. "There is a conspiracy that we can't understand. This trend really gives me sleepless nights."

Area Muslims have long opposed the existence of the church in Namasuba, complaining that church members try to convert area Muslims. Christian sources said the initial pretext for damaging the church building was that its outdoor stairway encroached on the alley; the estimated US\$535 (1 million Uganda shillings) in damages were limited to the stairway. The sources said that when the complaint of the stairway encroaching on the alley fell on deaf ears, local Muslim and community leaders criticized the church for making too much noise.

Namasuba is predominantly Islamic, with some estimates of Muslim adherents going as high as 80 percent of the population.

Pastor Zaake said area Muslims have been holding meetings at

night, which he suspects concern plans to paralyze Christian activities.

“It looks like they are planning for another attack, especially in light of the threatening messages I have been receiving on my mobile phone from anonymous senders,” a worried Pastor Zaake told Compass by phone.

The church has been meeting in Namasuba since March. It is located four kilometers from Kampala on a quarter-acre parcel.

Although the Ugandan constitution guarantees religious freedom, authorities hardly prosecute Muslim attacks against Christians, church leaders said.

“The police silence on the whole issue is worrying and leaves a lot to be desired,” Pastor Zaake said.