

New Year's Church Shootings Kill At Least 14 Christians

Gunmen killed at least 14 churchgoers returning from midnight New Year's services in Nigeria's Rivers state. One relative told *The Guardian* the attacks happened around 12:30 a.m. in a coordinated attack in two different locations. Reports indicate that the shots were disguised by the sound of fireworks, making it difficult for people in the area to realize what was happening.

The exact death toll is disputed at this time. *The Guardian* reports a death toll of 14 people, while BBC cites police sources saying at least 16 were killed. One anonymous officer said, "14 persons died on the spot, while 12 who sustained gunshot wounds were rushed to the hospital and are receiving medical attention."

David Umahi, governor of the Ebonyi state, condemned the attacks as a national tragedy in an official statement, according to the *Nigeria Independent*.

"We are here again faced with one of the greatest carnage and man's inhumanity to man," Umahi said. "To think that a man with blood running in his vein [sic] should open fire on innocent fellow citizens is so horrible and devastating. It is with great shock that I received the news and on behalf of my family and the patriotic citizens of Ebonyi State, I commiserate with my brother and friend, Governor Nyesom Wike, the people of Rivers state and the families of the deceased. Such inhuman act further puts question to our existence as sane and salubrious conscious beings."

Umahi urged security agencies to further investigate the massacre and find those responsible.