

Nigerian Army Kills Christian Mother of Five

Nigerian soldiers, summoned to stop inter-religious fighting between Muslim and Christian youths last week, shot and killed a Christian mother of five in the Yelwa area of Bauchi city, according to family and church sources.

Soldiers were called in to restore calm following fighting that broke out at a high school soccer match on Thursday, and later three Muslim soldiers shot and killed Charity Augustine Agbo and a Christian boy. The circumstances leading to the shooting of the boy, who is unrelated to Agbo, were not immediately known, and his name was not disclosed.

"There was not any justifiable reason for the soldiers to have shot the woman," said the Rev. Lawi Pokti, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bauchi State.

Pokti confirmed the shooting of the boy, who was initially reported as having been killed, and said he had been resuscitated in a hospital.

Augustine Agbo, husband of the murdered woman, told reporters that three soldiers shot his wife after storming their house on Lagos Street in the Yelwa area of the city.

"Three soldiers arrived in a Hilux vehicle with siren blaring, scaring us and forcing us to run into our houses," he reportedly said. "When we all ran inside, we saw these three soldiers coming to our house; then we locked the outside gate, but the soldiers followed us and broke the glass door and forced the door open and shot my wife twice on the chest."

Agbo reported the shooting to the Army commander in Bauchi, and his soldiers later came to his house to take his wife to an area clinic owned by the Church of Christ in Nigeria, he

reportedly said.

“After they left, the situation became worse, forcing us to take her to the ATBU Teaching Hospital, where she later died,” he told reporters.

The inter-religious violence erupted during a soccer game at the Baba Tanko Secondary School in Kagadama, a part of the Yelwa area, and then spread to other parts of Bauchi city. Other Muslims reportedly joined Muslim students from the school, attacked Christians and set their homes ablaze.

The Baba Tanko Secondary School is known as a hotbed of Islamic extremism, with Christian sources saying that most religious conflicts in Bauchi have been triggered by Muslim students at the school. In 2007, Muslim students along with other Muslims attacked Christians, killing dozens of them and destroying Christian-owned homes.

Mohammed Majeed Ali, assistant commissioner of police with the Bauchi State Police Command, confirmed the outbreak of the religious violence; he told Compass that the crisis has been contained.

For more than a decade, Christians in Bauchi state have been under pressure from Muslim extremists who have destroyed Christian worship places and killed Christians, said Pokti of CAN. Earlier this year, the Rev. Ishaku Kadah and his wife were abducted and killed, as was pastor Irimiya Maigida.

“I want to make it categorically clear that enough is enough, because despite the fact that the Christian community has constantly remained peaceful, it has become a target for these extremist Muslims even when there is peace,” he said.

Pokti faulted the government for being slow to prosecute Muslim extremists.

“Because of lack of pro-active measures by the government to

ensure peace in Christian areas in the state, Christians are being killed by Muslim extremists, and none of them has been brought to book,” he said. “The lukewarm attitude of the Nigerian government to problems of persecution facing Christians has made it easy for Muslim extremists to attack Christians and get away with such crimes.”