

How Nigerian Christians Persevere During Oppressive Summer

According to Open Doors' World Watch List, Nigeria is ranked the seventh most difficult country in the world to follow Jesus.

Christians in Nigeria are suffering a barrage of attacks from Islamic militants, which is the most common form of harassment and persecution they suffer within the nation. These attacks are extremely violent, and like this past summer, often deadly.

There has been a major attack against believers in each of the summer months, although this style of persecution and martyrdom is nothing new to them.

On June 21, there was a massive raid involving up to 300 Islamic militants who kidnapped 21 Christian women in the village of Kasan Kogi. To compare that massive number to a military force, there are 43 Marines in a platoon. That is just under seven platoons worth of soldiers attacking a rural Christian village.

While no formal declarations will be made, Nigerian Christians are at war.

There was little time for mourning, recovery and rebuilding before another attack occurred on Jul. 5. This raid was conducted by Fulani militants, and led to the murder of Rev. Adamu Buba of Iburu, Kasuwan Magani, Kaduna state.

Fast forward to Jul. 25, and the Fulani herdsman and other terrorist operatives killed six pastors in 2022, while kidnapping 27.

That number has since increased with the Aug. 2, killing of an 86-year-old Christian, in his own home, and the kidnapping of two others. The two who were kidnapped have since been released under speculation that a ransom had been paid on their behalf.

The spirit of the Nigerian believers has not been broken in light of these attacks. As Mac Philips, coordinator for the Evangelical Missionary Society, told *Morning Star News*:

"To preach the gospel for us is to die, to be safe is to stop preaching the gospel," Philips says. "It's a choice we all have to make—for us, we choose the former. The gospel in Nigeria cannot be preached without casualties. Our lives are increasingly on the line, but nothing compares to the excellency of sharing the gospel to a dying world without Christ."

This statement rang true as several other killings and ambushes have been reported against believers.

Sometime in mid-July, residents of Zangang village reported an ambush that saw three Christians shot. The victims were with the local health department and two of them succumbed to their wounds. Local resident Isaac Gandu explained what the health workers had been doing in the region:

"They had gone to some rural Christian communities to provide health services to them when they were ambushed by terrorists and shot at," Gandu told *Morning Star News*. "Two of the victims, who are males, died at the spot they were ambushed, and the third victim, a lady, is currently receiving treatment at a local hospital here."

Aside from the killings, kidnappings have broken apart families when they are unable to pay the hefty ransoms. In the June 21 raid that saw 21 Christian women kidnapped, Rev. Ezekiel Garba said his wife was among the those taken.

“They said they will marry off our women to their members if we don’t pay 100 million naira (US \$230,000) ransom within days,” Pastor Garba told Nigeria Report. “They said they will use them to produce children who will kill us in the future.”

In spite of these horrific killings and kidnappings, Christianity is still thriving in Nigeria. People are not renouncing their faith in the face of persecution and death. Many are standing in faith that their sufferings will bring about revival and spread the Word across the country.

Their sacrifice and faith are a beautiful reminder of what Paul writes in Philippians 1:21 (MEV), “For to me, to continue living is Christ, and to die is gain.” {eoa}

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