

# Parents Torn Over Loss of Daughter in Nigeria

Nearly seven months after their 24-year-old daughter disappeared during a wave of **Islamic extremist** violence in Bauchi, Nigeria, Helen and Dakim Gyang Bot can only assume that the voice on the other end of her cellphone that told them “we have killed her” was telling the truth.

The body of Simi Maltida Kim has not been found, and those who answered the active Catholic’s cellphone shortly after she disappeared on Sept. 1, did not indicate why they killed her. But there are signs that she was one of the hundreds of victims of Islamic extremist violence in northern Nigeria last year that has driven thousands of Christians to flee.

The Bots live in an undisclosed town near Jos, in Plateau state, but their daughter was a final-year student of Science Laboratory Technology at the Federal Polytechnic, in northeastern Nigeria’s Bauchi state. She had told them of an instructor there who humiliated her because of her Christian faith, they said.

“She told us that this Muslim teacher would summon her and then question her faith, or even bring in some Muslim students to confront her over her Christian faith,” said her mother, Helen Bot. “When she told us this, we advised her to keep away from the Muslim teacher as much as possible.”

The problem came to a head when the instructor failed her on a written exam without even looking at it, she said.

“This Muslim teacher did this to force our daughter into submitting to recanting her **Christian faith**, but this did not deter her from remaining firm as a Christian,” Helen Bot said.

Kim retook the exam. Right after turning it in, again the

Muslim teacher took her answer sheet and followed her out of the examination hall, telling her that he would never allow her to pass his course.

“The Muslim teacher tore her answer sheet in the presence of other students,” Helen Bot said. “And, disturbed about this sad threat to her, Simi reported the matter to her school supervisor and the head of the Department of Science Laboratory Technology. She also phoned us to inform us about her plight in the school. We asked her to report the issue to appropriate authorities in the school and then return home.”

Officials at the Federal Polytechnic in Bauchi declined to comment on the matter.

On Sept. 1, Simi told her friends in school that she was returning to the Jos area. Her mother phoned her that day and was surprised that she did not answer. She told Compass that it was the first time her daughter had never picked up the call.

“We communicated on the phone almost on a daily basis, and whenever I called her, even if she was sleeping, she would wake up and call me back,” she said. “So it was unusual that day when I phoned her several times and she did not respond.”

Dakim Gyang Bot, Kim’s 59-year-old father, told Compass that when she did not return home the next day, the family was all the more anxious because news had filtered into town that Christians were being killed in Bauchi city.

“We phoned her, and instead, someone answered the phone,” he said. “The voice was that of a male Muslim—we were able to know this from his accent; the man spoke to us in Hausa language, confirming our fears that he must be a Muslim. He refused to tell us where our daughter was.”

The family immediately contacted two of her Christian friends in Bauchi, who searched for her without success, he said. They

sent back word, however, that Muslim extremists had killed some Christians there on the day Kim was to leave for the Jos area.

“Her friends were told at the Bauchi motor park that some Christians who had got to the motor park on that day were killed by some militant Muslims,” Bot said.

The family reported the disappearance to police and the State Security Service and continued to call her mobile phone, in hopes that someone would answer again. Someone did. This time, a female with a similar Hausa accent said, “Don’t ever call this phone number again—we have killed her, so stop wasting your time looking for her,” her father said.

The priest at the family’s Catholic church told Compass that Kim might well have been killed by Muslim extremists in Bauchi.

“We learned that many Christians were killed in Bauchi at that time, so we are convinced that she must have been killed, too,” he said.

He described Kim and her parents as faithful and prayerful.

“In fact, in the past six months, her parents have been on their knees praying for her even with the knowledge that she must have been killed by Muslim militants,” he said.

Born Feb. 12, 1987, Kim was active in the Legion of Mary and the fellowship of Catholic students while at Bauchi Federal Polytechnic. A membership certificate from Christ the King Catholic Chaplaincy in Bauchi commends her as a distinguished member of the Catholic fellowship who was actively involved in the activities of the Legion of Mary.

Attacks on Christians in Bauchi state date back to 1958, but the recent incursion of Boko Haram has resulted in the killings of a dozen pastors and hundreds of Christians,

sources said. Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro local government areas, which are mainly inhabited by Christians, have become the targets of attacks by Boko Haram sect members and Muslim Fulani herdsmen.

Boko Haram seeks to impose a strict version of *sharia* (Islamic law) on Nigeria. The name Boko Haram translates loosely as “Western education is forbidden.”

On Jan. 22, two church buildings were bombed by Boko Haram in Bauchi city. The two churches, Evangelical Church Winning All 2 and St. Theresa’s Catholic Church, are located in the Fadaman Mada area near the town’s railway station. On the same day, Boko Haram members attacked Tafawa Balewa town, killing six Christians.

Other major towns and local government areas where Christians have been attacked and their church buildings destroyed are Bauchi, Alkaleri, Toro, Bulkachuwa, Misau, Darazo, and Azare.

In October and November 2011, 25 Boko Haram sect members were arrested in a training camp in Bauchi, where they were preparing to attack Christians. Security agencies recovered 435 rounds of ammunitions, 26 pistols, a pump action machine gun, and many explosive devices from the Islamists.

Nigeria’s population of more than 158.2 million is divided between Christians, who make up 51.3 percent of the population and live mainly in the south, and Muslims, who account for 45 percent of the population and live mainly in the north. The percentages may be less, however, as those practicing indigenous religions may be as high as 10 percent of the total population, according to *Operation World*.