

Pope Leo XIV Condemns Brutal Massacre of Christians at Prayer Vigil

Pope Leo XIV issued a strong message after Islamist militants attacked worshippers during an overnight prayer vigil in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, killing dozens. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)—a group aligned with the Islamic State—stormed the church with guns and machetes, resulting in mass casualties and horrific violence. The Pope called the attack a tragedy of faith and offered spiritual support to the grieving Christian community.

Militants affiliated with Islamic State attacked the Parish of Blessed Anuarite in Komanda, Ituri province, around 1 a.m. on July 27, targeting approximately 40 worshippers with machetes and firearms. MONUSCO confirmed at least 43 dead, including men, women and nine children, and several others were abducted while homes and shops burned in surrounding areas.

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Islamic State claimed responsibility via social media, stating ADF killed around 45 churchgoers before burning buildings and fleeing. This atrocity fits ADF's pattern of targeting Christians to destabilize the region and promote extremist ideology.

Pope Leo XIV expressed "dismay and deep sorrow" in a telegram sent to Congo's bishops. He prayed that "the blood of these martyrs may become a seed of peace, reconciliation, fraternity and love for the Congolese people." Cardinal Pietro Parolin delivered the message, calling for spiritual solidarity and urging humanitarian response in the aftermath.

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The UN mission MONUSCO and international groups condemned the attack as a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Observers warned the massacre underscores the growing threat of jihadist violence in sub-Saharan Africa, where fragile states confront escalating cruelty from militants.

Christian advocacy organizations decried the assault as one of many targeting faith communities in eastern Congo, where violence and persecution continue unabated. Specifically, the Orthodox Public Affairs Committee called it "a massacre of the faithful in the house of God," emphasizing the global failure to protect persecuted Christians.

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This attack highlights increasing threats to religious freedom for Christian minorities in Africa. Pope Leo XIV's condemnation aligns with Christian concerns over martyrdom, persecution, and the need for global faith-based response.

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