

Young Christian Men Burned to Ashes in Boko Haram Attack

At least 58 students were killed after Islamic militants attacked a secondary school in northeastern Nigeria late Monday night. The militants, suspected to be connected to Boko Haram, blocked the exits of a boys' dormitory, set it on fire and killed the boys who tried to escape the flames. Many of the boys who could not escape were burned alive.

In an interview with *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, Ibrahim Abdul, a teacher at the Federal Government College located in Buni Yadi, Yobe State, said the militants arrived at the school "around 11:30 p.m. and operated till around 4 a.m., killing 29 students."

According to the most recent reports, at least 58 young men were killed in the attack. Many witnesses reported the Boko Haram militants either shot or slit the throats of boys who attempted to escape the burning buildings, but many died in the flames.

"Some of the students' bodies were burned to ashes," Police Commissioner Sanusi Rufai told CBS News. One Christian charity active in Nigeria claims the death toll could rise above 100.

"I heard the cries of some people outside the school even before they [the militants] invaded the school," a student who survived the attack told Open Doors International, as reported by Christian Today. "From where I was hiding I could hear other students crying at the top of their voices. I saw fire on the roofs of the hostels and other buildings in the school. But God saved my life. After they killed the students and burnt the structures, they fled."

In an interview with International Christian Concern (ICC), Emmanuel Ogebe, special counsel for the Justice for Jos

project, linked attacks on federal schools to Christian persecution and explained why the Christian population is hard hit by these attacks.

“There are already confirmed reports of Christian victims,” Ogebe said. “There is a high likelihood that many Christians attended the school since many northern state governments, like Yobe, spend public funds on Islamic schools and discourage Christian schools. The federal schools [like the school in Buni Yadi] afford a rare opportunity for Christians to send their kids to government-owned non-Islamic schools.”

Boko Haram, whose name means “Western education is a sin,” has a stated goal of establishing a separate Islamic state in Nigeria’s northern and central regions where it can implement its ultraconservative interpretation of Shariah law. Boko Haram often targets schools, government institutions and religious minorities, mostly Christians, as part of a broader strategy to create a purely Islamic society in northern Nigeria.

In 2012, Boko Haram demanded all Christians living in northern and central Nigeria to flee south. Since then, Boko Haram has targeted the Christian minority with church bombings, drive-by shootings and deadly raids on Christian villages as part of its strategy to “purify” northern and central Nigeria.

“Boko Haram continues to operate almost unchallenged in northern Nigeria, unleashing unending violence on civilian populations,” says William Stark, ICC’s regional manager. “This heinous attack on the school in Yobe state comes less than a week after Boko Haram militants raided the Christian village of Izghe in Borno state, killing over 100 Christian villagers because of their religious identity.”

“ICC has applauded action taken by the U.S. to designate Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization in 2013, but more

decisive action must be taken,” he continues. “The Nigerian government, who declared a state of emergency in several of Nigeria’s northern states, has shown an inability or unwillingness to protect civilians from Boko Haram.”

“If no decisive action is taken either by the U.S. or Nigeria, the unbelievable violence being perpetrated in Nigeria will continue to accelerate and will likely reach genocidal levels in the near future if it has not already,” Stark concludes.

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