

On 10 June 2012, a suicide bomber drove a car into Christ Chosen Church in Jos, killing at least one other person. The Pastor of Christ Chosen Church, who was injured in the explosion, told Amnesty International: “somebody drove in ... they hit the church, the bomb exploded...everything went down... Passers by took me to hospital – people around the church came to pick us, neighbours came. They put me in the vehicle and took me to hospital. Some members even used motorcycles. Some members are still taking treatment there. I stayed [in hospital] for close to a month, I sustained injuries in my hand and leg and my ribs... 100 plus people were injured, 40 seriously, five very seriously, one later died...Now we have no place of worship, our vehicles were burnt to ashes, our property, all the instruments, everything is burnt. Now we are just worshipping in members' compounds. People are scared, some are still very much afraid.”⁶²

In a statement to journalists, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the 10 June attack, stating, “We are responsible for the suicide attack on a church in Jos... The Nigerian state and Christians are our enemies and we will be launching attacks on the Nigerian state and its security apparatus as well as churches until we achieve our goal of establishing an Islamic state in place of the secular state.”⁶³

On 17 June 2012, Boko Haram bombed three church services in Kaduna, killing at least 21 people. Revenge attacks between Christians and Muslims resulted in the deaths of at least 70 more.⁶⁴

COMMUNAL AND SECTARIAN VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE BELT

Many of the churches that were attacked were located in Nigeria's middle belt - an already volatile region where attacks and counter-attacks between Christians and Muslims and different ethnic groups have left thousands dead. Since 1999, over 10,000 people have been killed in inter-communal violence in the north and in the middle-belt.⁶⁵ In Plateau state, the site of some of the most protracted communal and sectarian violence, there have been significant incidents of violence in 1994, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2010 and 2011, resulting in the deaths of more than 2,000 people.⁶⁶ Yet the Nigerian authorities have failed to bring suspected perpetrators to justice or to take effective measures to prevent future violent clashes.⁶⁷ Very few people have been convicted of crimes related to the violence. Victims of the violence have not received redress or reparation, including compensation, leaving people destitute and further stoking feelings of resentment and desperation.

Several state and federal inquiries into communal and sectarian violence have been established but their findings and recommendations have never been implemented.⁶⁸

The attacks have led to the closure of churches and impaired people's right to freely practice their religion. A pastor of a church in Bauchi told Amnesty International, “Over 30 churches have closed in Borno, so people don't have a chance to serve God the way they want. This is a crucial problem happening in the north... [My] church in Bauchi was threatened... We were told [by police] to work on the issue of security by increasing the height of our own fence, but we need blocks, barbed wire, building materials. We are only able to do a little... there are only a few of our membership, many people have already left the place, we are just left at the mercy of god.”⁶⁹