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INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN NEWS

Ten Christians Killed in Muslim Rampage in Kano, Nigeria

Homes, churches destroyed as 500 people are displaced; government slow to respond.

Christitan Radio

by Obed Minchakpu

Christian TV

TUDUN WADA DANKADAI, Nigeria, (Compass Direct News) – A Muslim rampage last week in this town in the northern state of Kano resulted in the killing of 10 Christians and the destruction of nine churches, according to eyewitnesses.

Another 61 people were injured and more than 500 displaced in the September 28 disturbance, touched off when Muslim students of Government College-Tudun Wada Dankadai, a public high school, claimed that a Christian student had drawn a cartoon of Islam's prophet, Muhammad, on the wall of the school's mosque.

Christian students said no one saw the alleged cartoon and that no one in the tiny minority group of Christians would have dared such a feat, especially during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Of the student population of 1,500 at the high school, only 14 are Christians. Seven of them live on campus.

Iliya Adamu, an 18-year-old student at the school, told Compass that he had been preparing to go to class when a group of Muslim students stormed into his dorm and began to beat him.

"I was surprised that they were beating me without telling what I did," Adamu said. "I asked to know what was happening, and they claimed that one Christian student had gone to their mosque to draw a cartoon of Muhammad. In spite of my denying the act, they kept beating me."

Adamu said he saw them beating a Christian classmate, Sule La'azaru. Sensing that he would be killed, he ran to the principal's office to take refuge. Soon the remaining Christian students escaped and joined him in the principal's office.

Sensing danger, Muslim teachers locked the Christian students in the principal's office. They were kept there for about 30 minutes before the school principal, Alhaji Garba Wajume, arrived at the chaotic scene.

Disregarding the appeal of their Muslim teachers to calm down, Muslim students began throwing stones at the Christian students through the window of the principal's office, wounding the head of student Ayuba Wada.

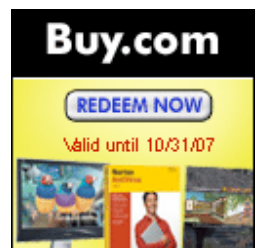
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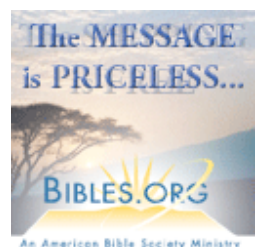


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“I was inside the office of our principal, with the others, when suddenly the Muslim students began throwing stones at us,” Wada said. “It was through this way that my head was broken. I was bleeding, and no help came as the situation became more riotous.”

Trapped in the Principal's Office

The Muslim students eventually broke into the office, but the timely arrival of the principal saved Wada's life.

Apart from his head wound, Wada also suffered cuts on his legs. He was taken to Hayin Yawa Clinic, where he was treated and smuggled to Doguwa village. Two of his colleagues also were taken to the clinic and subsequently escaped the carnage. The Christian students remaining in the principal's managed to escape from the Muslim mob unaided.

Christian student Shehu Bawa told Compass that when he arrived at the school that morning, he noticed there were no students on the assembly grounds as there normally would be.

“I then went to my class, however, after about 10 minutes I heard shouts of ‘*Allahu Akbar* [God is Great]’ all over the school,” he said. “The Muslim students were now attacking every Christian student on sight. Four of us ran into the office of the vice principal, but when it was finally broken into by the Muslim students, we ran out and escaped.”

The Christian students denied that any of them could have drawn a cartoon of Muhammad. “How can we take such a risk when we know that we are a minority and cannot stand [against] them?” Bawa told Compass. “This is a lie created to have a reason to attack us.”

Adamu added that no one saw the alleged cartoon.

“We suspect that either one of the Muslim student in the school did this to create an excuse for us to be attacked, or that a Muslim fanatic from the town might have done this to spark off a fight among Muslims and Christians,” he said. “How could we have done this when Muslim students are always around the mosque day and night because of the Ramadan?”

Having attacked Christian students in the school, Muslim students poured into the streets of Tudun Wada, joined in the mayhem by other Muslims. Burned down churches, vandalized Christian property and unrestrained killings marked the next four hours.

The churches burned included St. Mary's Catholic Church, St. George's Anglican Church, Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), Assemblies of God Church, First Baptist Church, and a Pentecostal church, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church.

Other churches destroyed by the Muslim militants were an African independent church, the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, and two other Pentecostal churches, The Chosen Bible Church and Deeper Life Bible Church.

Among the 10 Christians murdered were Augustine Odoh and his younger brother Cosmos Odoh, both members of St. Mary's Catholic Church. Another Catholic, Joseph Eze, was also killed. At press time, the corpses of the three Catholics were lying at the City Hospital in Kano city.



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Seven other Christians killed were buried in a common grave by officials of the government of Kano state on Wednesday (October 3), as government workers did not allow relatives or church leaders to identify the corpses.

Those injured were being treated at the Assumpta Clinic, Nomansland in Sabon Gari area of Kano city.

Musa Ahmadu Haruna, priest of St. George's Anglican Church, Tudun Wada Dankadai, whose church was burned, told Compass that he believes no Christian student in the school could have drawn an image of Muhammad.

"None of these students is capable of drawing a cartoon on a mosque," he said. "That is a frame-up to find a reason to attack us."

Town in Flames

Rabiu Danbawa, pastor of area ECWA church, said that when he heard of an outbreak of violence against Christians, he decided to move closer to the town center to see what was happening.

"I stood as they set fire on our churches one by one," he said.

Danbawa said he helped evacuate a member of his church, Juliana Lawal, on his motorcycle before returning for his own family. By the time he approached his home, the storming Muslims had already set fire to the structure, part of the church building already in flames.

Danbawa said he stood about 500 meters from the church as it burned.

"There was nothing I could do," he said. "I did not know the fate of my wife and my children. I prayed asked for their protection, even as I did not know whether they were killed in the fire in the church or not. However, a few days later, I found my wife and children safe."

Danbawa said he went to the police station, only to find the police dispersing the many Christians who had run there to escape the attack.

"We were told to leave, as our safety could not be guaranteed," he said, in tears. "Women and children all scampered to the bush, only to be attacked by the Muslims who had already hid themselves in the bush awaiting their Christian prey."

Many Christians, Danbawa said, were killed in the surrounding foliage as they tried escaping. Other Christian victims corroborated this statement.

Danbawa and his family are now refugees in Dogon Kawo village alongside other Christian victims. Other Christians are also taking refuge in Kalgo village. None of them have food or shelter, he said.

Christian survivors of the attack told Compass that their survival was a miracle. While Kano state was the site of religious violence in which hundreds died in 2004, the destruction in Tudun Wada, they said, is unprecedented.

The Rev. Father Emmanuel Koro, parish priest of St. Mary's Catholic Church in the town, told Compass that Muslim fanatics intent on killing him his hand cut with a machete.

"That I survived this attack is a miracle," Rev. Koro said. "When I had the

cut on my hand and was bleeding, it was not possible for me to do anything. Schoolchildren on the church premises were crying for help from me, but there was nothing I could do. I had to be helped out through a back fence in the parish to escape.”

The slashing of his hand, it turned out, may have saved his life, as it seemed to signal the aborting of a plan to burn Koro alive; they had already poured gas on him, he said, in preparation for doing so. He was rescued and taken to the police station, and then moved to a cathedral in Kano city.

Policemen who are Christians were not spared from attack; the Muslim rowdies attacked about 30 officers and their families, looted their household items and set their rooms on fire. Eyewitnesses said the Muslim fanatics also extended their attacks to Christians living in Kumbarau (Yarkawu) village.

Christian Shops Destroyed

The attack comes on the heels of a call in July by the Sultan of Sokoto, Abubakar III, to Muslims in northern Nigeria to rise against Christianity. Kano state government has led the implementation of *sharia* (Islamic) law throughout northern Nigeria.

Haruna of St. George’s Anglican Church estimated property damage at his church alone at 5 million *naira* (US\$40,718). Haruna said that in the carnage, not only churches but Christian businesses were attacked.

“All shops and businesses of Christians were looted and burnt,” he told Compass at Tudun Wada police station. “Christians have been killed, and all homes of Christians burnt too.”

Afiniki Andy Luka, a Christian widow, told Compass at the Tudun Wada police station that she missed the carnage because she was in Kano city.

“I was phoned and told not to come back to the town, but my children were alone in the house,” she said. “God in his way led them through the carnage as they escaped to the police station. I found them among displaced persons the following day.”

Luka said no house belonging to a Christian in town, nor a church, remains – they have all been destroyed.

“There is not a single church standing in this town as they have all been burned,” she said. “I had two shops, but the Muslims looted them and then burned every other thing in them. I have now been forced to become a refugee in my country with no home to stay in, no husband and no means of survival.”

Dr. Chudi Nwoye, medical director of Assumpta Clinic, told Compass that the victims of the crisis have not only been violated but traumatized.

“These people have been dehumanized and traumatized,” Dr. Nwoye said. “Religious conflicts have become recurrent problems in Kano. It is terrible that these victims have been made to experience deep emotional trauma for not committing any wrong.”

He said there is the urgent need at the moment for these Christians to be rehabilitated.

Mark Lipdo, director of the Stefanos Foundation, a ministry to the persecuted in Nigeria, told Compass that it is shocking that the Nigerian government has done nothing to assist the injured and the displaced.

“It is surprising that an overwhelming thing like this that has displaced thousands of Christians is not known to the Nigerian government,” he said, as the government initially downplayed the extent of the tumult. “The government must act to check such unprovoked attacks against Christians.”

Haruna of St. George’s Anglican Church said, “We are living under persecution in Kano state, and yet, we are being told that we are under a democratic government. Do Muslims really want us to co-exist together as a nation? I doubt so.”



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