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MISSIONS

Two Church of Christ in Nigeria Journalists killed in Jos

Other Christians murdered in area that continues to be wracked by violence.

By: Lekan Otufodunrin
Compass Direct News

Wednesday, 28 April 2010, 22:17 (EST)

Font Scale: A A A

The killing of Christians in Jos, Plateau state in Nigeria continued over the weekend with two journalists and five other persons falling victim to Muslim youth gangs.

Nathan S. Dabak, an assistant editor at a newspaper of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) called The Light Bearer, and Sunday Gyang Bwede, a reporter at the publication, were stabbed to death on Saturday (April 24) at Gado-Bako in Jos North Local Government Area along with an unidentified motorcyclist.

"The staff of the church were murdered in cold blood by some Hausa Muslim youths," the Rev. Pandang Yamsat, president of COCIN, told Compass today. "This is clear because they have been using the hand phones of the deceased journalists and boasting that they are the ones that killed them."

The young Muslim men have been boldly answering calls to the cell phones of the deceased journalists, he said; when a friend of Dabak called his cell phone number, an unknown voice responded, "We have killed all of them – you can do your worst!"

Dabak, 36, and the 39-year-old Bwede had left their office on Saturday morning and were on their way to interview local politician Bulus Kaze when they fell into the hands of young Muslim men, Yamsat said.

The church started a search for the two Christians that day but did not discover their bodies until about noon on Sunday at the mortuary of Jos University Teaching Hospital, he said. He added that the church was eagerly waiting for results of a police investigation.

"The security team of the church has been communicating with the police, but they are yet to make any headway on this unfortunate incident," he said.

Burial of the slain journalists is scheduled for Friday (April 30).

In his statement on Monday (April 26), Yamsat lamented that "while efforts have been tailored towards the return of peace to the state by the military Special Task Force, it is regrettable that the state is confronted with a spate of killings."

"The church is still mourning the death of its pastor and his wife killed in Boto, Bauchi state," Yamsat said, in reference to the April 13 kidnapping and murder of the Rev. Ishaku Kadah, 48, and his 45-year-old wife Selina. "It is sad that it should again be left to face another brutal murder of two of their staff."

The state branch of the Nigerian Union of Journalists also condemned the circumstances that led to the death of the two journalists, expressing deep concern over what it described as "a series of attacks on its members in recent times in the course of carrying out their legitimate duties."

Four other Christians also were killed on Saturday (April 24) in the Dutse Uku district of Jos' Nasarawa Gwom area in a revenge attack following the discovery of the corpse of a teenage Muslim who had been missing. Their names were not released at press time.

The four Christians reportedly died, three of them stabbed to death, when hundreds of Muslim youths rampaged throughout the area in protest.

Earlier, police reportedly exhumed eight bodies from shallow graves in a predominantly Christian village near Jos. The discovery of the bodies brought to 15 the number of corpses found in three days in an area fraught with Muslim aggression that has left hundreds of Christians dead.

Jos has become a flash-point for ethnic and religious tensions in Plateau state, which is located between Nigeria's mainly Muslim north and Christian south. Previously hundreds of Christian villagers were struck with machetes and burned to death on March 7 in Dogo Nahawa, Zot and Rastat, three villages in Jos South and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas.

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On March 17, Muslim Fulani herdsmen assaulted two Christian villages in Plateau state, killing 13 persons, including a pregnant woman and children. In attacks presumably over disputed property but with a level of violence characteristic of jihadist method and motive, men in military camouflage and others in customary clothing also burned 20 houses in Byei and Baten villages, in the Riyom Local Government Area of the state, about 45 kilometers (29 miles) from Jos.

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On Jan. 17, two pastors and 46 other Christians were killed in an outbreak of violence in Jos triggered when Muslim youths attacked a Catholic church. Police estimated over 300 lives were lost in subsequent clashes, in which 10 church buildings were burned.

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