



(suspected bomb, Kogi State; copyright CSW)



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NIGERIA | Mosque and churches attacked in Kogi State, pastor murdered in Borno State

A 24-hour curfew was imposed on part of Nigeria's Kogi State yesterday, after a mosque and church were attacked earlier this week and a suspected bomb left at another church was taken away for analysis. Meanwhile, in Borno State, a pastor was reportedly murdered by gunmen.

Okene Central Mosque in Okene, Kogi State was attacked by gunmen yesterday, who shot and killed four people, including two soldiers. The gunmen, thought to be members of Boko Haram, dressed in white and pretended to be worshippers, chanting Islamic songs before opening fire. Two of the gunmen were killed but others escaped the scene.

Earlier that day, a suspected bomb found at the Revival House Church in Lokoja, capital of Kogi State, was taken away for analysis.

On the evening of Monday August 6, gunmen attacked Deeper Life Church in Otite, an area close to Okene, disconnecting the electricity supply and blocking all three entrances before firing indiscriminately at the congregation of a crowded weekly bible study, killing 15 people at the scene. Eyewitnesses state that they even sprayed bullets under church benches to ensure that no one survived. It is thought that these gunmen were also members of Boko Haram.

According to one source, the attackers caught several members of the congregation who managed to escape from the building and slit their throats. Five people died later in hospital, bringing the total number of fatalities so far to 20.

In addition to the curfew, a 24-hour surveillance of all of Okene's worship centers and other perceived targets was initiated by the Acting Inspector General of Police.

Meanwhile, Nigerian news sources report that in Maiduguri, Borno State, suspected Boko Haram gunmen shot and killed Pastor Ali Samuri of the Good News Church on the same evening. The pastor was reportedly followed to his house in the Mafoni area by his killers. According to reports, he had received threats earlier in the year warning him to leave his home, but had disregarded them.

Reverend Yunusa Nmadu, CEO of CSW-Nigeria, said, "With the recent insurgencies in Kogi State we are witnessing a systematic advancement of the Boko Haram menace towards the southern part of Nigeria. I am afraid if nothing proactive is done, Boko Haram may soon throw the entire country into total anarchy, which is their ultimate desire."

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "CSW extends our deepest condolences to the families of those who died in these appalling attacks. It is clear that Christians in Northern Nigeria are now not only being targeted on Sundays, but also whenever they meet together and even in their homes. It also increasingly appears that Muslims who do not follow its teachings are also considered legitimate targets by Boko Haram. It is vital that the perpetrators of these atrocities are apprehended and that peace-loving Nigerians are once again able to exercise their right to gather together in worship in safety, and to also feel secure in their own homes."