

Market Drayton Churches Together: Prayer for Persecuted Christians - 16 Jan. 2019

NIGERIA

2 Jan - Christian Solidarity Worldwide Nigeria on the brink as elections approach

www.csw.org.uk/2019/01/02/feature/4183/article.htm

As you read this Nigeria is preparing for a general election next month. Election season can be extremely volatile, and since the last elections the levels of insecurity have risen across the country. Two factions of Boko Haram terrorists are challenging government forces in the north-east, with reports at the time of writing of an Arabic speaking armed group infiltrating Sokoto State. Kidnappings for ransom have also increased.

There was a staggering number of casualties in 2018 alone in attacks by a militia consisting of members of the Fulani tribe. Local observers describe the violence as a campaign of ethnoreligious cleansing; it has claimed over 6,000 lives and displaced 62,000 people since 2011, largely in central states. These communities are paying an unacceptably high price for the government's failure to formulate an effective response to this violence, and tensions will only increase as elections approach.

No longer just 'clashes'

There's been a long history of disputes between nomadic herders and farming communities across the Sahel region, often described as 'farmer-herder clashes', but recent attacks in Nigeria are so frequent and well-organised that this description is no longer adequate. Survivors speak of a heavily armed militia with sophisticated weaponry including AK-47s, and in some cases chemicals and rocket launchers.

Central Nigeria used to be the nation's bread basket, but is now littered with destroyed homes and farmlands and displaced communities. Many farmers are no longer able to return to their fields, either because they have been occupied or out of fear of further attacks, leading to a risk of food shortages and possible famine.

Last June church leaders in Plateau State issued a statement rejecting the official narrative of these attacks as mere 'clashes', asking, 'How can it be a clash when one group is persistently attacking, killing, maiming, destroying; and the other group is persistently being killed, maimed and their places of worship destroyed?'

Cont/...

7 Jan - Morning Star News Christian Family, Church Devastated by Killing of Church Elder in Nigeria

morningstarnews.org/2019/01/christian-family-church-devastated-by-killing-of-church-elder-nigeria

Police declined to take action against Muslim Fulani herdsmen.

Ladi Yakubu does not know how her family will eat after Muslim Fulani herdsmen destroyed crops on their farm in Kaduna state, Nigeria on Nov. 26 and shot and killed her husband.

"My husband is no more alive, and so the burden to feed our children is on me," she said. "How do I feed them without having a job? And I cannot go to the farm because of the murderous activities of these herdsmen."

The 49-year-old Yakubu, a member of the Dogo Awo village congregation of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in north-central Nigeria, said she knew the gunmen were Fulani herdsmen because they have lived near the village for several years. Herdsmen also destroyed crops on their farm in late 2016 and late 2017, she said.

Her husband, ECWA elder Yakubu Musa, was 50.

Her 20-year-old son, Believe Yakubu, received a bullet wound in his leg in the attack. Her other children are ages 15, 18, 23, 26 and 28, but without access to their farm outside the village, the adult children have little income-earning power.

The attack was different from night-time raids that have terrorized Christians in north-central and other states in Nigeria. Church members were helping the family to harvest rice the morning of Nov. 26, she said, when they stopped for lunch at about noon.

"As we were eating, a Fulani man came over to where we were sitting under a tree," Yakubu told Morning Star News. "We offered him food, but he declined to eat with us. When my husband asked the Fulani man whether he needed help in anyway, the man said he was only out to find areas he could take his cattle to for grazing."

The herdsman left, but soon they heard gunshots near the farm, she said. The frightened church members returned to the village, while Yakubu, her husband and their son and nephew stayed to gather the harvest into one place and try to move tools and equipment, she said.

"While we were doing this, the Fulani man returned with one other Fulani," Yakubu said. "Both of them were armed with guns. They shot at us, killing my husband and shooting my son on the leg, while me and my husband's nephew narrowly escaped being shot. My husband was shot twice in the stomach."

The armed herdsmen left the area, she said, but the next morning they returned and destroyed crops, water-pumping machines for irrigation, herbicide sprayers and even the food warmers the family had taken to the farm, she said.

"My husband's corpse was recovered by our church members, and he was buried here in our house," she said, pointing to the grave. "That is the grave you see by the door to this room where we are seated."

Police Inaction Emboldens Herdsmen

After a Nov. 25, 2016 raid, when Fulani herdsmen destroyed rice, beans, pepper and other crops, her husband reported the attack to police and the leader of the local Fulani community, but they took no action, Yakubu said.

"No action was taken against them, but then my husband, who loves peace, said we should forgive the Fulani herdsmen and continue to work on the farm and trust God for provisions," she said.

The police inaction emboldened Fulani herdsmen to return again during the harvest season of 2017 and destroy crops, she said. Again her husband reported the attack to police and the local Fulani leader, with no result.

"We were all devastated by the actions of these herdsmen as we were never compensated even once for the destruction on our farms," Yakubu said. "Yet they still returned to kill my husband on the same farm they had destroyed our crops."

Every morning during family devotionals, she said, her husband would instruct them never to repay evil with evil. "'Leave judgment of every evil act against you to God,' he would always tell us," she said, sobbing. "And in obedience to his instructions, we have forgiven those who murdered my husband. We will never avenge his death, as God says, 'Vengeance is mine.'"

Cont/...

2 Jan - Aid to the Church in Need

Family's fresh plea for release of Christian schoolgirl held by terrorists

acnuk.org/news/nigeria-familys-fresh-plea-for-release-of-christian-schoolgirl-held-by-terrorists

The family of a Nigerian schoolgirl being held by an Islamist terrorist group has called on fellow Christians to redouble efforts to pray and campaign for her release.

Rebekah Sharibu, whose 15-year-old daughter Leah has been held by Boko Haram for more than 10 months, said: "I know that all over the world believers are praying and advocating for the release of my daughter, but until now I haven't seen my Leah.

Leah was one of 110 students kidnapped when Boko Haram attacked a girls' boarding school in Dapchi city, north-east Nigeria, on 19th February 2018. Five of the schoolgirls died after they were seized.

About a month after the kidnapping, 104 of the hostages were set free, leaving Leah as the only student in the hands of the terrorists. According to girls who were released, Leah, the only Christian in the group, refused repeated attempts to force her to convert to Islam.

Boko Haram soldiers told Leah that if she recited the Islamic shahada profession of faith and donned a hijab they would let her go, but the schoolgirl refused.

Nathan Sharibu, Leah's father, said: "My daughter's trust and faith has made me realise that I have been living under the same roof with an admirable disciple of Christ. "I am highly encouraged by her strong faith in the Lord and her refusal to renounce Christ even before death at the hands of Boko Haram."

He said: "I invite all of you to pray for Leah and for all those who are captive for refusing to renounce the faith. She chose to remain a Christian even in the face of the possibility of death. Leah stands out for her courage in preserving her Christian faith and identity."

Oct-Dec 2018 - Voice Magazine, Release International Crisis In Nigeria

releaseinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/RELEASE-MAG-R104.pdf

As Deborah chatted with a neighbour under a mango tree one day, five young men drove up, jumped out of their truck with machine guns and walked purposefully toward her home. Her nieces, 9-year-old Palmata and 7-year-old Kumai, whom she had adopted as her own daughters, ate their after-school snacks just outside the front door while Deborah's husband sat inside the house preparing for a Bible study that evening.

Deborah quickly followed them into her house, but one of the men stopped her in the hallway. 'You have to lie down!' he barked at her. As she lay on her stomach, the armed man pressed his boot into her lower back.

Then she heard four shots in the room where her husband was studying. Overcome with terror, Deborah started praying. She believed that she would be next.

To her surprise, the killers left her cowering in the hallway. Once outside, however, they grabbed her young daughters and forced them, screaming, into their truck.

'Why are you taking us?' Palmata cried Deborah scrambled to her feet and ran after the truck, but she soon stumbled and fainted in the cloud of dust left in its trail.

When she woke up in hospital, the medical staff confirmed her fears – her husband had been killed and her girls had been

kidnapped. She was immediately hit by the grief already shared by so many Nigerian women.

Deborah had five older sons, and after the attack she sent all but the youngest to live in a safer city, where they wouldn't be forced to join the Boko Haram terrorist group. She believed her youngest son, who was 12, would be safe with her. But three months later, two men ambushed him as he walked home from school. 'He was shot in the head and the chest,' Deborah said. After his funeral, Deborah packed her things and moved into her church.

She no longer felt safe in her own home.

Soon, however, rumours circulated that terrorists from Boko Haram were planning to attack the church. Deborah, her pastor and his family fled to the relative safety of a camp for internally displaced people. Deborah later learned that the extremists had stolen all of her belongings and burned her house. In a matter of weeks, she had lost her husband, her two daughters, a son and her home.

Cont/...

Nov 2018 - Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust

Hidden Atrocities - A visit report by Baroness Cox and Revd David Thomas

www.hart-uk.org/news/press-release-12-november-2018

Survivor testimonies

Sarah, from Jos

On the outskirts of the city, under the foothills, are two houses close together, where Sarah (not her real name), her husband and children, her mother, uncle and other family members lived. The Fulani had for a long time been coming around that area to graze their cattle and it was alleged that a Fulani boy was killed around there, but no evidence of that has been seen. On the late evening of Thursday 27 September, they came and killed nine people in one house and three in the other, including a pregnant woman. They shot Sarah's husband and children and so she begged them to kill her too, but they refused, saying that they wanted her to cry and bear the pain.

Church Warden at St Timothy Church, Jos

"They came around 7pm and left just before midnight. More than 200 of them in black cloth – well armed. Yesterday we lost another 19 of our people. We are not safe."

Trinity Church had suffered a previous attack, which left it largely in ruins. It was attacked again on 1 October. The militants took or destroyed all the music equipment, which included ten speakers, a 12-channel audio mixer, a petrol power generator, a keyboard, as well as the altar table and 85 chairs. Two Security staff escaped through a door at the back of the compound. Before the escalation of attacks, Trinity Church had a congregation of 700-800. Today, there are only 20 worshippers.

Lydia, from Ningon village, Gashing District

"They capture cows and surround our villages. They use pick-ups, guns and loot and burn our homes. Before the attack, the Fulani told us: 'There's no point in sowing because we won't have a harvest to reap'. They were hacking and killing people, making sure that those that were shot were finished off. They wore black and red – red to conceal blood splashes on their clothes as they butchered their victims. Soldiers, possibly Fulani in military uniforms, shot and killed anyone who resisted. We were surrounded so some people climbed trees and managed to escape after the attack. My husband was killed in the attack by Fulani."

Dates of next meetings: Wednesdays 20 Feb, 20 Mar, 17 Apr & 15 May.

Chundung, from Kurra, Burom

“We were at a funeral on a Saturday morning when, outside the church, we heard gunshots. 18 people were killed and their bodies were set alight. The attack continued until 5pm. Fulani wore black. They burnt homes. An old man who couldn’t run was killed. Some women and children gathered their possessions and hid in bushes. But we left with nothing. I had to run 20 miles to a military camp, where I was put into truck to Kurra before being moved to Barkin Ladi. Then Kurra was attacked and five were killed.”

Helen, from Ex-land village

“Around 10am I heard gunshots and people started fleeing to bushes. We received a phone call saying a woman was killed, so we collected her body. She had been shot in the head. When she was killed someone saw a boy in white clothing who was taken to police station. While he was being interrogated, the Fulani came and demanded his release. They mobbed an outpost and returned wearing black and red. I went with five others to hide in a room. I lay flat on the floor and prayed with my children as houses were torched. They were carrying petrol bombs. They were in vehicles. They were going from house to house, looting and taking away anything they found valuable and then setting the houses on fire thereafter. After the attack, at 5pm, I phoned my husband but he didn’t answer. He was killed and left on a road to decompose. My children had taken refuge in a Muslim home. Those who survived were those who went to Muslim homes and told to be quiet. But on Sunday, we heard a message that if Muslims continued to provide shelter, they would be killed. A red Cross vehicle was attacked and worker shot in the foot. 37 were killed in total.”

Kaneng, from Kakuruk

“It was 23 June and I was on my way to a burial. But I was told the road was not safe. Someone had been killed on the way to the funeral. We saw smoke from the village and noticed that the Fulani were preparing for an attack. So we hid for three days until the military took them away. 10 people were killed.”

Helen, from Gana-Ropp

“The attack began at 5pm on 23 June. I called my brother but there was no reply. The next morning I found out that my brother, his wife and four others were shot, butchered and burnt. On 30 June, my home and the hospital was burnt. Six people were killed in a clinic in Mararaban Kantoma. In Gana-Ropp, 9 were killed and 69 houses destroyed.”

21 Dec - Morning Star News

For Survivor of Attack on Christians in Nigeria, a Lonely Christmas

morningstarnews.org/2018/12/for-survivor-of-attack-on-christians-in-nigeria-a-lonely-christmas

Nearly three months after Muslim Fulani herdsmen in north-central Nigeria shot and killed his wife and four children, Samuel Wah will spend Christmas in his hospital bed, a bullet still lodged in his back.

Since the Oct. 3 attack on Ariri village, 20 kilometers (12 miles) east of Miango in Plateau state, that killed 19 Christians, the 45-year-old member of St. Williams Catholic Church has remained in the hospital with the bullet lodged near his spinal cord.

Doctors at Enos Hospital in Miango are not equipped to remove it safely, and Wah lacks the resources to transfer to another hospital for the advanced surgery, he said.

Wah was ill with fever the day of the attack, and he and his family had gone to bed when they were awoken at 11 p.m. by the sounds of stones hitting their roof, then sporadic gunshots, he told Morning Star News from his hospital bed.

“I forced myself to stand up while my wife was saying the gunmen are Fulani herdsmen,” he said. “I moved to the door of my living room and then opened it, only to find a Fulani man standing and aiming the gun towards where I was standing. He shot me.”

As he went down, Wah said, he heard the shooter call another armed Fulani over.

“They were speaking Fulfulde, and since I understand the language, I overheard what they were saying to each other,” he told Morning Star News. “After shooting me, the Fulani man then shot my wife and children. All of them were killed. They must have thought that I was dead too, and so moved out of my house.”

His wife, Laraba Samuel, was 39; his daughter, Reizeh, was 13; his son, Wah, was 10; his daughter, Jummai, was 7; and his son, Wei, was 5.

The herdsmen also attacked the house of 95-year-old Ahmadu Angah, 95, killing him and wounding his wife, Mary Ahmadu, 70, said Angah’s son, Joseph Ahmadu. Four of Angah’s grandchildren were also shot and killed: Bulus Danladi, 8; Gado Danladi, 7; Lami Monday, 5; and John Kurah, 7.

Joseph Ahmadu, a 42-year-old elder at the congregation of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in Ariri village, told Morning Star News that 19 Christians were killed in the village that night and three others wounded.

He said Samuel Wah’s brother, 60-year-old Monday Wah, was also shot and killed alongside his wife, Abigail Monday Wah, 40, and four children in their home: Alaska Monday Wah, 8; Talatu Monday Wah, 6; Peter Monday Wah, 4; and Ezekiel Monday Wah, 2.

The Muslim Fulani herdsmen also killed another relative, Mali Wah, 40, and his wife, Jummai Mali Wah, 30, in the house, Ahmadu said.

His grandmother, Asabe Ahmadu, 80, escaped unhurt, but her daughter, Azumi Oscar, 30, was shot and wounded. She also is receiving treatment at Enos Hospital, he said.

Ahmadu told Morning Star News that this was the third attack by Fulani herdsmen on them this year, following assaults in June and July. Slain in the June attack was Adamu Tureh, 80, a member of St. Williams Catholic Church in Ariri. In the July assault, Danladi Musa, 45, was wounded from gunshot in the eye, and Maiangwa Tshohu, 70, was shot and killed, Ahmadu said. Tshohu also was a member of the Catholic church in Ariri. Ahmadu expressed sadness that in spite of the attacks, the Nigerian government has shown no inclination to protect them from herdsmen terrorism.

“Ariri has been deserted by the few who have survived,” he said. “Many of our people have been forced to flee the village, and those of us remaining are finding it difficult to protect ourselves. I plead that the government protect us. I also want to appeal to the Fulani herdsmen to please end their unnecessary attacks on us, as we have done them no wrong.

“We pray our Lord Jesus Christ forgive our attackers and give them repentant hearts.”

Links to the full reports featured on this sheet, along with information about other relevant articles are available on the Market Drayton Churches Together website, linked from the P4PC section as “Recent Reports”

churchestogether-marketdrayton.org.uk/p4pc

Other Countries

Pakistan:

There has been very little news of **Asia Bibi** since her release from prison. She is being protected by the Pakistan government at a "safe" location, awaiting the hearing by the Supreme Court of an appeal against her acquittal. Until that appeal is resolved she is not being allowed to leave the country.

Reports vary on how much she is able to see her family, though they are also being protected by the government. Britain is showing a reluctance to grant the family asylum should Asia Bibi be allowed to leave Pakistan; at present Canada or Australia would be their most probable destination.

When substantial fresh news of her situation is published, I am adding links to the dedicated page in the P4PC section on the Churches Together website.

churchestogether-marketdrayton.org.uk/main/p4pc/asia-bibi-updates

China:

Arrests of Christians and other religious minorities in China have continued in recent months and seem to be escalating in frequency and severity. Attention has been focussed particularly upon a group of unregistered churches known as Early Rain Covenant Churches.

A report in the Hong Kong based South China Morning Post (first item below) states, "*millions of faithful in China today who would rather see their independently operated churches close than comply with official regulations to register with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and China Christian Council – together known as "lianghui" or "two organisations" – which govern Chinese Protestant churches.*

"For decades, house church leaders and their followers have cited "irreconcilable differences" with official churches over issues such as biblical teachings, church autonomy, appointment of clergymen, and their history in refusing to register with the authorities."

There is also increasing persecution of Three-Self Churches; one article below reports on the demolition of one of their buildings on Christmas Eve. Catholic Churches also suffer harassment in similar ways. This has increased since September when the Vatican agreed that the Chinese Communist Party could nominate Bishops for it to approve. Many Catholics have been meeting for years in underground churches led by priests loyal to Rome, but who are now refusing to submit to political control from Beijing. These groups are now being perused by local officials.

China Recent Report Headlines

Inside China's unofficial churches faith defies persecution | South China Morning Post

www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2180873/inside-chinas-unofficial-churches-faith-defies-persecution

Solidarity to Persecuted Leads to Persecution | Bitter Winter bitterwinter.org/solidarity-to-persecuted-leads-to-persecution

House Church Pastors Refuse to Submit | Bitter Winter bitterwinter.org/house-church-pastors-refuse-to-submit

"Religious Bans" Sweep Across Universities | Bitter Winter bitterwinter.org/religious-bans-sweep-across-universities

"Church-Free Zones" Near Schools | Bitter Winter bitterwinter.org/church-free-zones-near-schools

Nursing Homes Now a Target of Persecution | Bitter Winter bitterwinter.org/nursing-homes-now-a-target-of-persecution

Christmas Gift for Henan: Church Destroyed | Bitter Winter bitterwinter.org/gift-for-henan-church-destroyed

'Today, We Worship in Police Cars'-60 More Arrests in Chinese Church Raid - Open Doors USA

www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/worship-police-cars-60-arrests-chinese-church-raid

Police in China Given Quotas for Arrests of Christians - Open Doors USA

www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/police-in-china-given-quotas-for-arrests-of-christians

ChinaAid: More than 30 Early Rain Covenant Church members taken into custody

www.chinaaid.org/2019/01/more-than-30-early-rain-covenant-church.html

ChinaAid: Government abuse results in death of Christian's unborn baby

www.chinaaid.org/2019/01/government-abuse-results-in-death-of.html

ChinaAid: Updated: Government removes first of Ten Commandments from church

www.chinaaid.org/2019/01/government-removes-first-of-ten.html

ChinaAid: Catholic churches across China targeted in wake of Vatican-China agreement

www.chinaaid.org/2018/11/catholic-churches-across-china-targeted.html

CHINA Nuns convent half demolished in Qiqihar (Video) [asianews.it/news-en/Nuns-convent-half-demolished-in-Qiqihar-\(Video\)-45791.html](http://asianews.it/news-en/Nuns-convent-half-demolished-in-Qiqihar-(Video)-45791.html)

I also post links to various accounts of persecution of Christians on the Market Drayton Churches Together Facebook Page. Here is a selection of some from the last few weeks:

Uganda

New Christian in Uganda Loses Family, Plantation for Leaving Islam - Morningstar News

morningstarnews.org/2018/12/new-christian-in-uganda-loses-family-plantation-for-leaving-islam

Christian Mother, Pastor Face Death Threats in Uganda - Morningstar News

morningstarnews.org/2018/12/christian-mother-pastor-face-death-threats-in-uganda

India

Hindu Extremists Threaten Children at Sunday School in Southern India - Morningstar News

morningstarnews.org/2018/12/hindu-extremists-threaten-children-at-sunday-school-in-southern-india

Christians Hospitalized after Terrifying Christmas Attacks in India - Morningstar News

morningstarnews.org/2018/12/christians-hospitalized-after-terrifying-christmas-attacks-in-india

Morocco

'My father would kill me' - Secretly following Jesus in Morocco - Open Doors UK & Ireland

www.opendoorsuk.org/news/stories/morocco-190104

Britain

Living as an ex-Muslim - BBC News - Video

www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-46102493/converting-from-islam-to-christianity-one-man-s-story

Randall Hardy