

Latest religiously-motivated attacks in Nigeria

NIGERIA: Latest religiously-motivated attack reveals military complicity



Uniformed soldiers attack village

On 23 January, a village in Farin Lamba near Jos, central Nigeria, was attacked by armed men, some of them in military uniform, who killed two men, a woman and a baby. In self defence, the villagers shot one of the assailants in the arm. He turned out to be a soldier from a nearby security post. They also pursued the men, taking down the license number of the military vehicle in which they fled. The soldiers are now known to be under the command of Captain Zakari, an officer in Nigeria's federal army. The army has refused to comment on the allegations. Eyewitnesses of previous assaults on predominantly Christian villages and neighbourhoods have regularly reported that their attackers wore military uniforms.

New shoot-to-kill policy in question

This latest attack calls into question the controversial introduction of a shoot-to-kill policy by the Nigerian army. This move came in the aftermath of violence over Christmas and the alleged murder of an election official at a polling station on 17 January. However, continuing discrepancies in reports of the murder, coupled with persistent allegations of the military's complicity in religiously-motivated violence, have forced a review of the policy.

CSW's response

Commenting on the mounting evidence of military complicity, CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston stated that the attack again highlighted an "urgent need for a review of local security arrangements. These arrangements are clearly not working, and the non-Muslim community has no confidence in them. In order to ensure the confidence of both religious communities and restore peace, the Joint Task Force must be cleansed of sectarian elements, and the hierarchy of the police force must be restructured to better reflect the ethnic and religious diversity of Nigeria."

Nigeria

Nigeria can be roughly divided into the predominantly Muslim north, the central or Middle Belt area where Christians and Muslims are more or less evenly balanced, and a mainly Christian south. Each region also contains sizable minority of people who follow traditional African beliefs. Religious violence has cost the lives of over 50,000 people since 1999, when one-third of Nigeria's 36 states instituted the Islamic penal code making Shari'ah (Islamic) law the highest legal authority, creating a

de facto state religion in violation of the national, secular constitution. For many non-Muslims in northern and central Nigeria daily life consists of a veneer of normality that barely conceals an underlying reality of chronic discrimination and tension which periodically erupts into deadly, but organised, violence



Christian Solidarity Worldwide