

SUFFERING BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN SUDAN AND NIGERIA

A Briefing from the Religious Liberty Program, the Institute on Religion & Democracy

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:26-27

South Sudan

National Congress Party (NCP) ruling Islamists in Khartoum have armed militias of South Sudanese and others to destabilize South Sudan. SPLM head Pagan Amum in June briefed Congress that the NCP had distributed 79,000 AK-47's.

Some 2,000 people have been killed and tens of thousands displaced from their homes in these militia attacks.

Saturday, August 29, a militia from the neighboring Lou Nuer tribe attacked Wernyol in Jonglei State, Bor County, killing 43 men, women, and children and wounding 62 others. Among the dead was Episcopal Church of Sudan Archdeacon, the Venerable Joseph Mabior Garang. Archdeacon Joseph, who was also the Archbishop of Sudan's Commissary for the new Diocese of Twic East, was shot at the altar of the church in Wernyol during a service of Morning Prayer. Most likely, he was targeted because he was a prominent, beloved leader in the community. Reports from Wernyol revealed that after the Archdeacon was shot twice in the legs, 30 men and women from the church service and town, including tribal chiefs, soldiers, a university student, and several of the town's oral historians surrounded him to shield him from further attack. They all gave their lives in their valiant efforts to protect their shepherd.

Other militia attacks in August include one on Ezo Town, Western Equatoria State, in which three were killed, including an Episcopal lay reader, and ten children taken from the Episcopal Church property and one on Akobo, Jonglei State, in which 185 Lou Nuer were killed by a Murle militia. And just weeks ago, on Sunday, September 20, the same Lou Nuer militia that attacked Wernyol attacked Duk-Padiet, also in Jonglei State, killing 80 and wounding 46.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in South Sudan, that the Lord would bring healing from this terrible blow, and give them hope again for a future of peace and justice in Sudan. Pray that God to cast the militias and their sponsor, the Islamic regime in Khartoum, into confusion and disarray; for repentance and reconciliation among all the peoples of South Sudan; and for comfort and support for the family of Archdeacon Joseph and all of those who were killed.

Nigeria

Our family in Nigeria lives under threat from Islam. Particularly in northern and central Nigeria, where state governments and radical Islamists impose Shari'a, Christians suffer violence and marginalization. Persecution was brought home to us by the two attacks on our own Bishop Ben Kwashi, Mama Gloria, and their family. But since that time, more riots and other attacks have taken the lives of hundreds, if not thousands of our brothers and sisters, many whose names we will not know until we meet them in Eternity.

This summer, Boko Haram, an Islamic terrorist group known as the Nigerian Taliban, (many trained in Sudan) launched a series of attacks on church and state facilities in 4 northern and central Nigerian states, Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, and Kano. Boko Haram militants attacked Christian and Government targets, killing hundreds, maybe thousands, with pastors hacked to death and beheaded, and Christians used as human shields. Men were forced to convert to Islam or die, and women and girls were kept as hostages. The media continues its usual downplay of Christian persecution.

Another tragic attack was the murderous riots sparked by Muslim attacks on Christians in Nov. 2008 which left six pastors dead, more than 100 other Christians killed, 40 churches destroyed, and more than 25,000 persons displaced. The outrage began over suspected vote fraud in local elections but then targeted Christians.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Nigeria, that God would bring justice and peace to them. Pray for the truth to be revealed, and the pattern of making the victim and the victimizer morally equivalent to be ended. Pray comfort for the families of those who have been killed, and for the peace of Christ to reign throughout Nigeria, bringing conviction to the hearts of the Islamists that they might be set free to know the Truth.

For all of Africa, and elsewhere, we pray against the spread of Islamism and Shari'a. We pray for our family in Uganda and Kenya, that they would continue to stand firm against the incursion of Islam and that they (and we) would be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves in our spiritual warfare against radical Islam.