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12 killed in attack 'by Al-Shabaab gunmen targeting Kenyan Christians'

***See video selected by Human Rights Without Frontiers:
<https://binged.it/2erpHLn>***

By Abigail Frymann Rouch

World Watch Monitor (25.10.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2eElkum> - Twelve people have been killed in an attack in north-east Kenya believed to have been carried out by the Somali Islamist group Al-Shabaab.

Media outlets sympathetic to the group reported that the latest incident "killed Christian Kenyans" who were not from the local area.

Police in the town of Mandera, which lies on the border with Somalia, said the attackers used improvised explosive devices to break the metallic doors and enter the Bishaaro Hotel, before shooting 12 people dead in their rooms.

Ten of the victims were visiting the town to stage performances in schools relating to books on the curriculum, according to the Daily Nation newspaper.

Al-Shabaab has carried out many attacks targeting Christians in the mainly-Muslim border region. Earlier this month, militants shot dead six people in a night-time attack the group said was aimed at forcing Christians to leave the area.

The commissioner of Mandera County, Fredrick Shisia, claimed Al-Shabaab is receiving funding from Kenyan businessmen.

Shisia said the government had received intelligence that the group was extorting taxes and protection money from businesses in Mandera. However, he said that anyone making such payments would be punished, and accused them of undermining the government's efforts to combat terrorism.

"Anyone who is in communication with members of Al-Shabaab will be arrested and charged," he said.

Critics have accused the Kenyan government of failing to prevent the attacks and being slow to implement measures that would improve security, such as a more consistent electricity supply that could provide more consistent lighting.

The attack earlier this month, in which six people died, took place at a gated residential building, many of whose 33 residents had moved to Mandera for work.

However, it is not clear how many of the dead were Christians. According to Kenyan media, three were quarry workers, two worked for a Muslim relief agency and one was a barber. (Al-Shabaab's own radio station had claimed at the time it had "killed six Christians".)

The quarry workers were John Ndegwa, Martin Munene and Duncan Ndegwa and the NGO workers were Evans Araka and Lewis Mwalimu. The barber's name was David Chege.

Evans Araka was a credit manager at Islamic Relief. His fiancée, a Nigerian named Rebecca, posted on social media that the couple, who had five children together, had been due to marry in November.

Relatives of one victim, lorry driver David Muchoki Munene, had expressed concerns about his safety. His mother said she had asked him to leave his job and move closer home, but he refused.

Al-Shabaab has been at war with Kenya ever since Kenyan troops entered Somalia in 2011 to defeat them. According to the BBC, Muslims in northern Kenya increasingly see the group's attacks on civilians and security forces as a threat to their own interests, and are making efforts to improve relations with the Christians working there.

Al Shabaab Kills Christians in Raid on Village in Coastal Kenya

At least four dead in latest Islamic extremist attack in the area.

Morning Star News (02.02.2016) - <http://bit.ly/23IThLQ> - In a pre-dawn raid on a predominantly Christian area in coastal Kenya on Sunday (Jan. 31), Islamic extremist Al Shabaab rebels killed at least four Christians, beheading one of them, area sources said.

In the Kaisari area of Maporomoko village, near Pandanguo about 25 miles inland from the Indian Ocean town of Lamu, Al Shabaab rebels attacked from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m., a wounded survivor at Mpeketoni Sub-County Hospital told Morning Star News.

The victim, a Christian from the Maporomoko-Bondeni area who was shot in his right hand, said there were five or six heavily-armed assailants who spoke Somali and were dressed in military uniform. They shot two Christians to death, hacked and beheaded another and killed at least one other by setting his house on fire, he said.

"I could not understand them, so they shot me in my hand, but I managed to escape while a neighbor who was with me was beheaded by the other attackers," the Christian (name withheld) said from his hospital bed. "As I fled for my life bleeding, I could see two houses burning. Those who were attacked are Christians. I am very sure that the attackers were looking for Christians."

The beheaded man was identified only as Mwaura, a Christian.

"This is the third time the area has been attacked, and we have lost several Christians," the survivor said.

The rebels, who are fighting government and regional forces in Somalia, regard the northern coastal area of Kenya as Islamic territory. Al Shabaab, linked with Al Qaeda, took responsibility for the attack in a call to news organization Al Jazeera.

"Our fighters attacked non-believers in the occupied Muslim land of Lamu," a spokesman said. "Our *Mujahideen* [Jihadists] killed several non-believers in the attack. We will give more details later."

Unknown people resembling Al Shabaab militants had previously been seen in Pandanguo, a predominantly Muslim area, an area Christian leader said. Pandanguo is about 60 miles from the Somalia border.

"The Muslims want to wholly own the coastal region, and they want that the Christians should leave the area for them, but our presence in Lamu will bring many to the Christian faith," the pastor said. "God has called us to be the salt and the light and to lead many to the marvelous light of Christ."

Maporomoko village has a population of about 2,000 people from Christian tribes – Kikuyus, Meru and Kamba – and from non-Christian or Muslim Orma, Boni and Wasanye tribes, as well as Somalis. The Al Shabaab militants attacked only the Christian areas, the Christian leader said.

The rebels burned homes, left several people wounded and kidnapped some Christians, according to various sources.

"Security forces were following the footpaths of those kidnapped, who disappeared into the Pandanguo area, which is the home of the Boni and Somalis," the pastor said. "The Christians are now finding out about some of their missing neighbors. The security personnel are not disclosing information, as tension remains high in areas where Christians have settled themselves: Mpeketoni, Hindi and some parts of Maporomoko area, which has been a target of Al Shabaab militia."

Inspector General of Police Joseph Boinnet told media the attack occurred near Pandanguo, which witnessed killings during June 2014 Al Shabaab attacks. Boinnet reportedly said security personnel were in the area tracking down the militants.

"They were dressed in military attire and heavily armed," a senior police officer reportedly said. "They spoke in the Somali language and shot at locals and beheaded others before escaping on foot."

On June 15, 2014, Al Shabaab rebels attacked Mpeketoni, in Lamu County, selecting out Christian males as they killed more than 57 people, area sources said. The estimated 50 Al Shabaab militants attacked two hotels, a police station and other buildings in a five-hour assault with guns and grenades. Sources told Morning Star News the attackers were chanting "*Allahu Akbar* [God is Greater]" and killing whoever could not recite verses from the Koran.

After Sunday morning's assault, Mpeketoni residents on Monday morning (Feb. 1) protested terror attacks by Al Shabaab militia in the region. Police had to stop the demonstration of angry Mpeketoni residents to keep them from retaliation attacks on Somalis living in the area. At the same time, hundreds of people in Kaisari, greater Maporomoko and nearby Jima and Nyatha villages have been seen fleeing their homes.

"We feel very insecure, and our lives are in danger," a mother of four in Hindi told Morning Star News. "Next time, the attackers will come and destroy us completely."

Al Shabaab rebels have launched several attacks in northeast Kenya since Kenyan forces led an African coalition into Somalia against the rebels in October 2011, in response to terrorist attacks on tourists and others on Kenya's coast.
