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## **Kenyan Christians killed for refusing to recite Islamic Shahada**

World Watch Monitor (22.08.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2w0z88L> - Three Kenyan Christians were hacked to death by Al-Shabaab militants on Friday night (18 August) after they refused to recite the Islamic prayer of faith. A fourth Christian – the mentally challenged older brother of one of the three – was also killed.

At around 9pm, Changawa Muthemba, who was in his forties, was dragged out of his home in Kasala Kairu, Lamu County, by a group of armed men and taken to the nearby home of his brother-in-law, Joseph Kasena, 42, where a 17-year-old neighbour, Kadenge Katana, also happened to be at the time.

The three men were held at machete point and ordered to recite the *Shahada*. When none of them did, the attackers began to tie them up. When the men resisted, they were hacked to death. Then the attackers went to the home of Joseph's older brother, Charo, who was in his late forties, and killed him.

Joseph's wife, Caroline, who is in her late thirties, watched everything happen and is "severely traumatised", according to a local source. Their 17-year-old daughter, Zawadi, was out of town at the time.

"Joseph was an elder at a local church. He did communal farming, worked as a cook in a local hotel and also served as a night guard at the home of an expatriate family, who had to leave the area due to the deteriorating security situation. His wife runs a small kiosk," said the source.

The source said the family of the 17-year-old boy, who was part of a local Catholic church, are "devastated" at his murder.

According to the source, Al-Shabaab militants and their sympathisers are "deeply embedded" in the local communities of wider Lamu and Tana, which are in coastal Kenya, near the border with Somalia where Al-Shabaab originated.

"They move around freely and often are at odds with the Kenyan farmers, deliberately sending their animals to feed on their crops," the source said. "Locals complain that the police are not doing anything about the situation and even show preferential treatment to the herders. Earlier that day, some locals met with the Somali herdsman, who threatened them. But this was not the reason for the attack; it only provided the opportunity for it. Al-Shabaab knew these men as Christians, and Joseph as a church elder."

Last month, Al-Shabaab beheaded nine Kenyans – some of whom belonged to a local church – in the Pandaguo area of Lamu West. One witness, Johnson Kitsao, told the Washington Post the attackers were "specifically looking for non-Muslim men".

Al-Shabaab had threatened to disrupt the Kenyan elections earlier this month, and had called on Muslims to vote against the Kenyan President, Uhuru Kenyatta. However, the voting process “went smoothly”, according to CSW, “and Kenyatta’s party won all of the predominantly Somali counties, as well as the presidency”.

### **Background**

Al-Shabaab, an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, has targeted Kenyan Christians for years, attacking churches, public places and buses. This has left behind a trail of pain and destruction, and has instilled fear among regions where Christians are the minority.

Last month, as mentioned above, Al-Shabaab militants surrounded Jima village and beheaded nine people, in an attack that targeted non-Muslim men only. Two days earlier, attackers had killed four people (including police), also in the Pandagu area, in a similar pattern. This appeared to be a change of strategy for the group, which has used improvised explosive devices (IEDs), guns and grenades to attack Kenyan Christians.

In April 2015, Al-Shabaab gunmen armed with AK47s attacked the Garissa University College, killing 148 people – mainly Christian students. The previous year, in June 2014, twin attacks on Mpeketoni and the nearby village of Poroko left 52 people dead. The attackers singled out all who could not recite Muslim prayers and killed them in plain sight, before destroying their homes. The militants struck the Westgate Shopping mall in 2013 in an attack that left 68 people dead. They separated Muslims and killed Christians in one of the deadliest attacks in the city.

Reports suggest Al-Shabaab has set bases in Boni, a forest that straddles the Kenyan-Somali border. The group has been using the forest as a cover to attack villages on the Kenyan side, according to security sources.

The attackers are believed to be Kenyan youths trained by the group in Somalia, before returning to the country. Church officials say they were brainwashed, radicalised and recruited on the basis of promises of a better life and benefits for their family.

“We believe that some people have been paid by the militants to ensure a constant supply of young fighters,” said Fr Wilybard Lagho, vicar general of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa. “At first, they used schools and madrassas, but that has since changed after the security and religious leaders became alert. They are now using social media to recruit. There is a lot of deception.”

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### **Three killed in Shabaab attack**

CSW (18.08.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2fS8zhZ> - At least three men were beheaded and several houses torched on 18 August during an early morning raid on a village on the northern coast of Kenya by members of the Somali Islamist terror group, al Shabaab.

The gunmen reportedly struck Maleli Village in Lamu County at around 12.30am on 18 August, targeting men but sparing women and children. While villagers put the number killed in the raid at four, a local official has informed Kenyan media that three people died.

Similar overnight raids were perpetrated by al Shabaab on 7 July on Jima and Pandanguo villages, located near Maleli, in which nine men were beheaded. According to survivors, the militants only targeted non-Muslim men. Some villagers also claimed they had informed police that al Shabaab were in the area, but no action had been taken. These

attacks occurred a matter of days after three police officers were killed in another nearby village.

A dusk to dawn curfew that was imposed in Lamu, Garissa and Tana River counties following the attacks on 7 July will now be in place for the next three months. Security forces are reported to be pursuing the assailants, who are believed to have hideouts and training grounds in the dense Boni Forest, which extends to the Somali border, and from where al Shabaab has launched attacks into the three counties.

Al Shabaab is reported to have set up permanent training bases in the Boni forest in mid-2012. Although there area is now surrounded by three army bases, according to a member of the local community, the group continues to cause "untold suffering" and is "having a field day inside the forest without any fear of the soldiers and the police."

Since May, the terrorist group has ramped up attacks on Kenya. Over 50 people have been killed in ambushes or by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Garissa, Mandera, and Lamu, with many more injured. Several have also been abducted. On 31 May around 70 terrorists invaded Fafi town in Garissa County destroying a telecommunications mast, killing a Christian school teacher as she taught a class, and abducting a male Christian teacher along with a Muslim teacher who had tried to assist him. The Christian teacher was later found dead. According to Morning Star News, before leaving the school the militants beat up Muslims of Somali descent as a warning for "accommodating these infidels."

During Kenya's recent elections, al Shabaab released a series videos in Swahili and English and featuring Kenyan members of al Shabaab in which the group censured President Uhuru Kenyatta and his party, threatened to launch attacks to disrupt the elections, and called on Kenyan Muslims not to vote. However, the voting process went smoothly, and Kenyatta's party won all of the predominantly Somali counties as well as the presidency.

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## **Christian teacher killed, another abducted along with Muslim in Kenya**

***Suspected Al Shabaab militants walked into an elementary school compound in north-eastern Kenya on May 31 and shot a Christian teacher to death, sources said.***

Evangelical Focus (16.06.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2tiPUyb> - Elly Oloo Ojiema was shot at Fafi Primary School in Fafi, about 100 kilometres (62 miles) from Garissa.

"The suspected Al Shabaab militants entered the school compound and right away fired on the teacher who was teaching the pupils", one of the sources said.

The suspected members of the Somali rebel group kidnapped another Christian teacher, Joseph Kamau, along with a Muslim teacher who tried to defend him, the sources added.

Ojiema was a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Kamau belongs to the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA).

***Muslims beaten for helping Christians***

Trying to shield the Kenyan Christian, the Muslim teacher of Somali descent told the assailants he would die with him, according to a Somali Muslim teacher who requested anonymity.

"The Al Shabaab got angry", the teacher told Morning Star News, "and told the teacher: 'We are going to teach you a lesson for protecting the infidels', and immediately the two were carried away to unknown destination."

Before escaping with Kamau, the militants beat Muslims of Somali descent at the school for housing Kenyan Christians.

"We are sounding a warning to you that we shall not take lightly you who are accommodating these infidels," one of the attackers said, according to a local source.

The incident has increased fears among Christians in Garissa, already on edge after years of guerrilla assaults by Somali rebels fighting the government in Somalia.

### ***Pastors call on the government for security***

A pastors' fellowship in Garissa met on June 2 and called on the Kenyan government to provide more security, the chairman of the fellowship told Morning Star News by phone. Officials promised to send security guards to protect worship services, he said.

Kenya Defense Forces personnel have been deployed in the area to defend against Al Shabaab attacks. "We are living in a very fragile environment where Al Shabaab attacks can happen at any time."

Al Shabaab militants have ramped up attacks on Kenyan soil this month, targeting Kenyan workers from the interior and security personnel and increasingly planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) along roadsides.

### ***Violence on rise in Garissa county***

IEDs reportedly claimed the lives of at least 10 people, most of them police officers, in a three-week period starting in late May.

The attacks have caused an education crisis in Garissa County, on the border with Somalia, as many teachers have fled the area. The county also lost many teachers after a massacre of 148 people at Garissa University College on April 2, 2015.

Rebels from Al Shabaab, which is allied with Al Qaeda, 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.

Kenya ranked 18th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

## **Christian killed in Islamic extremist attack in Northeastern Kenya**

### ***Suspected Al Shabaab rebels shoot two people to death.***

Morning Star News (19.05.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2rJpHas> - Al Shabaab militants are suspected in the killing of two people, at least one a Christian, in a May 12 gun attack in northeastern Kenya, sources said.

Five suspected rebels from the Somali Islamic extremist group targeted non-Muslim quarry workers in El Wak, near the Somali border in Kenya's North Eastern Province, in the early morning at the workers' company-owned quarters, a Christian leader told Morning Star News. He said quarry worker Dalama Otieno, a member of an area East African Pentecostal Church congregation, died from gunshot wounds to the head.

An area resident told Morning Star News that the assailants used a jihadist slogan during the assault.

"I heard them say, 'Allah Akbar [God is Greater]', and then followed gunshots," he said.

A second worker, unidentified at this writing but assumed to be a non-Muslim Kenyan like nearly all the quarry employees, died of gunshot wounds to the chest, the Christian leader said. Predominantly Christian workers from Kenya's interior have been targeted in a series of Al Shabaab attacks that have shaken Christian communities in Kenya's northeast.

Area residents reported seeing unfamiliar visitors in El Wak the night before the attack.

"We have warned our church members to leave the volatile area, which has been a black spot prone to Al Shabaab attacks," the Christian leader told Morning Star News. "This is the area that led to the massacre of 28 teachers a few years ago."

Rebels from Al Shabaab, which is allied with Al Qaeda, 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.

"These Al Shabbab militants have made some of our Christians to be their scapegoats, as they see Kenya as a Christian country that is fighting to rid Al Shabaab from Somalia," the Christian leader said.

El Wak is a key supply line to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces that have retaken territory from Al Shabaab insurgents in Somalia. The jihadist rebels have retaliated with attacks on Kenya's northeast. Al Shabaab is suspected of killing administrative chief Dekow Abbey Sirat and abducting two police reservists on Monday night (May 15) in the Omar Jillo area, near Mandera, and planting an explosive device that killed four people when their vehicle ran over it in Liboi on March 16.

El Wak is about 160 kilometers (105 miles) from Mandera.

"The Christians living in Mandera are living in great fear of an imminent attack from the Al Shabaab," the church leader said. "I think we have to think whether to continue with the Christian mission work or to leave the place. We cannot pretend that all is well."

Kenya ranks 18th on Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

On Oct. 25, 2016, Islamic extremists targeted Christians in the shooting deaths of 12 non-local Kenyans at a guest-house in Mandera. Al Shabaab rebels took responsibility for the pre-dawn attack on the guest-house, where a Kenyan theatre troupe from outside the area was staying, according to the militants' radio affiliate. An area pastor told Morning Star News that Christians were targeted.

"The attackers knew exactly whom they were attacking, that is, the Christians," he said, adding that survivors told him the assailants were shouting, "Get rid of these infidel actors."

The theatre group was made up of university students who reportedly travelled to the mainly Muslim area of Mandera to perform plays in local schools.

Suspected Al Shabaab militants targeted Christians in a grenade and gun attack in the early morning of Oct. 6, 2016 that killed six people. Al Shabaab reportedly took responsibility for the attack at a residential compound in Mandera, with a spokesman for the militants saying it was designed to drive Christians from the area. At least one of the victims was reportedly a Muslim.

The attack in Mandera, tucked in Kenya's northeast corner near the Somali border, reportedly wounded several others. Among 27 people rescued were Christians who said the assailants shouted that Mandera was Muslim territory and that "infidels" should leave it. The pastor of an area church told Morning Star News that two members of his congregation were among those killed.

On Jan. 31, 2016, in a pre-dawn raid on a predominantly Christian area in coastal Kenya, Al Shabaab rebels on Jan. 31 killed at least four Christians, beheading one of them. An attack on a bus and a truck near Mandera by Al Shabaab insurgents took the lives of two Christians in December 2015, and on July 7, 2015, Al Shabaab killed 17 quarry workers near Mandera, including several Christians.

On Dec. 2, 2014, Al Shabaab killed 36 non-Muslims, most of them Christian, in an attack on quarry workers near Mandera. The killings came after a Nov. 22, 2014 assault by Somali insurgents in the same area that left 28 non-Muslims dead, including 19 Christians. Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the Dec. 2 massacre, calling it vengeance for police raids on mosques in Kenya and Kenyan military involvement in displacing the Islamic extremist militants from Somalia. Prior to the Nov. 22 attack, police raided and closed four mosques in Mombasa that they said were recruitment centers for Islamic terrorists.