

Table of Contents

- ***Muslim extremists kill six Christians in coastal Kenya***

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Somali militants suspected in attacks in southeastern county.

Morning Star News (07.01.2021)- <https://bit.ly/3t9gFXk> - Muslim extremists in Kenya, including suspected militants from Somalia, killed six Christians in southeastern Kenya between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. on Monday (Jan. 3), sources said.

Members and sympathizers of Somali militant group Al Shabaab were suspected of joining local Muslim extremists in attacks in Widho, Majembeni Mpeketoni, in coastal Kenya's in Lamu County, area residents said.

The assailants, some dressed in Al Shabaab fatigues and others in Islamic attire, began by abducting a well-known Christian coconut tree seller, Francis Kaburi, forcing him down from one of his trees at 7 a.m. on Sunday morning (Jan. 2), said Joyce Wanjiru, the wife of one of the other slain Christians.

Her husband, Joseph Mwangi Maina, received a call from Kaburi at 1 a.m. on Monday (Jan. 3), saying that Muslims had abducted him, that his life was in danger and that they were holding three other Christians inside a shop belonging to John Murimi in Widho, she said. Murimi, Peter Maingi and Peter Musyoka had been meeting for prayer at the shop when the militants captured them.

"Then the call ended," Wanjiru told Morning Star News. "The shop was then torched, and the three died inside there."

At 2 a.m. the assailants arrived at Mwangi Maina's house, his wife Wanjiru said.

"Kaburi called to my husband to get out of the house," she said. "He then opened the door and went out."

Speaking in the Somali language as well as in the Kiswahili common in Kenya, the assailants questioned her husband, Mwangi Maina, accusing him of refusing to return to Islam, she said. A non-Somali who had been raised a Christian in Kenya, Mwangi Maina converted to Islam seven years ago but returned to Christian faith two years later, she said.

"They were accusing him of refusing to become a Muslim and hence being an enemy propagating bad religion," Wanjiru said. "Soon he was pleading with them not to kill him, and thereafter there was groaning and screaming from my husband. The children started crying very loudly, and the attackers forced us to come out of the house."

Her children, ages 15, 12, 10 and 4, fled as the Muslim extremists set their house on fire, she said. Neighbors from Wanjiru's tribe, Kikuyu, and her dialect arrived as the assailants left with Kaburi.

"My husband had just been beheaded and the head placed on his back," Wanjiru told Morning Star News.

From there the assailants went to the house of Murimi, the Kenyan Christian not of Somali descent who had died in the fire set at his shop. Finding Murimi's wife, Grace Wanjiru, and four children, ages 12, 10, 8 and 2, the assailants forced them out and set their house ablaze, sources said.

The attackers proceeded to the house of another non-Somali Christian, Maina Jigi. Area residents said that at about 2:30 a.m., the Muslim extremists set his house on fire, burning Jigi to death.

Arriving next at Kaburi's house, the assailants found his family members had fled, Joyce Wanjiru said.

"Around 3 a.m., fire was seen around Kaburi's house," she said. "We went to the police post in Widho, and the following day the body of Kaburi was found burnt beyond recognition inside his house."

Mwangi Maina and Murimi were members of the Redeemed Gospel Church. The other four Christians killed were members of the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa, sources said.

All Kaburi's property, including his motorcycle, was destroyed, a representative of Morning Star News accompanied by a security guard found upon visiting the area. Local residents said only Christians were targeted in the attacks. Among five houses set ablaze, one belonged to a Muslim who had been friendly to Christians, but the rest belonged to Christians, and only Christians were killed, residents said.

"No killing of Muslims was done; they had been alerted of the attack, so they had moved away from the area where the killing and the torching of the houses took place," the representative said.

The families who lost their loved ones are traumatized, homeless, without food and clothes, including school uniforms, she said.

"The situation is so bad on the ground – people have fled for their lives as fear has gripped the whole area of Widho," the representative said. "Please pray for the families affected. The situation is tense; people have fled from the area for fear of their lives. The government needs to beef up security for the Christians and churches in this area."

The coastal region of Kenya, especially Lamu, is predominantly Muslim, and extremists seek to make it an independent Islamic zone, she said. That the assailants were suspected of being a mix of Al Shabaab and local Muslim extremists is a signal to area Christians to be on the alert, the representative said.

In June 2014, more than 60 people were killed in attacks in and near the Mpeketoni area. The Somalia-based Al Shabaab militant group claimed responsibility.

Along with attacks on non-Muslims on Kenya's [coast](#), rebels from Al Shabaab, which is allied with Al Qaeda, have launched several [attacks](#) in 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.

Somalis generally believe all Somalis are Muslims by birth and that any Somali who becomes a Christian can be charged with apostasy, punishable by death. Somalia's

constitution establishes Islam as the state religion and prohibits the propagation of any other religion, according to the U.S. State Department. It also requires that laws comply with *sharia* (Islamic law) principles, with no exceptions in application for non-Muslims.

Kenya ranked 49th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian; Somalia ranked 3rd.

Photo : Charred home of the slain Joseph Mwangi Maina in Widho, Lamu County, Kenya. (Morning Star News)
