

Appendix 14:
Kano Govt Reveals Plans of Militants vs Christians

Tuesday January 18, 2005

NIGERIA: CHRISTIANS CRITICIZE GOVERNMENT REPORT ON RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

State officials warn of more attacks by Islamic militants in 2005.

January 18 (2005 Compass) -- Christian leaders in northern Nigeria say a report released in December by the government of Kano state grossly underreports the number of Christians killed by Muslim militants in violent attacks last year. Estimates of the value of churches and homes destroyed in the clashes are also much too low, leaders claim.

The report states that 84 people died in religious violence in Kano in 2004. However, Methodist Bishop Foster Ekeleme, chairman of the Kano chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), told Compass that reliable estimates place the casualty count close to 3,000 Christian dead.

“When you are talking about the dead, it is painful,” Ekeleme said. “Is it even good to kill one person?”

“Let us not continue to argue about numbers. What I am asking as the CAN chairman is, why should even one Christian be killed? What are the offenses of these 84 that have been killed?”

According to CAN, Muslim extremists destroyed church buildings and private properties belonging to Christians totaling nearly \$1.5 billion in value. The government, however, reported Christian property losses of only about \$70 million.

The official report, prepared by an 11-member commission of inquiry appointed by Kano Governor Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, said 160 people were injured and another 1,971 displaced in attacks against Christians.

Spread of Violence

Religious violence in Kano was provoked by earlier clashes in the town of Yelwa, Plateau state. In February, Islamic militants attacked Christians participating in morning devotions in a Yelwa church and killed 48 worshippers, including Pastor Samson Bukar.

Two months later, Christians and other groups attacked Muslims in Yelwa. An estimated 350 Muslims died and another 250 disappeared in that clash, according to police and press reports. The incident, in turn, sparked the assaults on Christians in Kano that are the subject of the recent government report.

Alhaji Sule Ya’u Sule, Shekarau’s Director of Press Affairs, told journalists on December 17 that the 84 people reportedly killed in the Kano outbreak included both Muslims and Christians. CAN leaders, however, rejected that finding, insisting that the only fatalities were among Christians.

More Attacks Feared

Christians may well face more violence in Kano this year. At a press conference on December 21, State Information Commissioner Alhaji Abubakar Garba Yusuf revealed that government security agents have uncovered plans by Muslim militants to attack Christians and burn down churches in order to force the observance of Islamic law in Kano state.

Yusuf indicated that groups of militants have been recruited and sent to Saudi Arabia to undergo training. He said the government has intercepted inflammatory pamphlets circulating in the Islamic community that aim to incite Muslims against their Christian neighbors.

“The idea is to create the opportunity for militants in military and police uniforms to easily storm Sabon Gari (Christian quarters) and destroy churches and property in order to give the government a bad name,” Yusuf said.

“These devilish plans ... are deliberately planned to destabilize the state and create unprecedented unrest.”

Yusuf said that police have arrested about 30 Muslim militants in possession of weapons and military and police uniforms.