



Written by [James Murphy](#) on May 13, 2019

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## Jihadist Gunmen Kill Six Including Priest in Burkina Faso Church Attack

Between 20 and 30 Islamic militants attacked a Catholic church in the town of Dablo in the northern portion of Burkina Faso on Sunday. The attack is the third of its kind in the last five weeks. After firing on the congregation, the attackers burned the church.

Among those killed were the church's priest, Father Simëon Yampa, and church elders. Troops were sent to quell the uprising, but they had to travel 30 miles to get there. By the time reinforcements arrived, the damage had already been done.



The Vatican reports that [Yampa's funeral](#) was held today.

Formerly known as Upper Volta, Burkina Faso is a tiny landlocked nation in West Africa. It was once considered a bastion of religious freedom in Africa. But since 2015, Islamic militants have been engaged in efforts to destabilize the government.

According to the town's mayor, Ousmane Zongo, the town was in a state of panic as not only the church but other buildings were burned down. A health center was looted and partially burned in the violence, as well.

"Armed individuals burst into the Catholic Church.... They started firing as the congregation tried to flee," Zongo told French news agency AFP.

"There is an atmosphere of panic in the town. People are holed up in their homes, nothing is going on. The shops and stores are closed. It's practically a ghost town," the mayor said.

Attacks on Christians and other "Western" targets in the country have been occurring since at least 2016, but there has been a dramatic rise in violence in 2019. A total of 12 Islamic attacks were reported in all of 2016, but thus far in 2019, nearly 160 attacks have been reported. Radical Islamic groups such as [Ansar ul Islam](#), the [Group to Support Islam and Muslims \(GSIM\)](#), and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS) — an offshoot of ISIS — are responsible for the violence.

The church attack comes on the heels of another incident in which two French Special Forces soldiers were killed in a raid where four hostages — two French nationals, an American, and a South Korean — were rescued from Islamic militants. The kidnappers were poised to turn the hostages over to [Katiba Macina](#), another Islamic militant group based in Mali, which shares a border with Burkina Faso.



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The jihadists aren't limiting themselves to Catholicism either. On April 28, a Protestant church in the town of Silgadji was attacked by seven gun-wielding men on motorcycles at the end of a Sunday service, killing the pastor, 80-year-old Pierre Oult, his two sons, and at least three other church goers.

The gunmen reportedly gave Oult and the others a chance to [convert to Islam](#). When they refused, the attackers took the victims one by one behind the church and shot them.

Much of the Islamic anger in Burkina Faso has to do with the teaching of so-called Western thoughts and ideals. Besides churches, schools are also a favorite target of the militants, who are pushing to make the country an Islamic state and impose Sharia Law.

"A lot of schools have been torched," said head teacher Samuel Sawadogo, who has lost most of his staff in the northern town of Foubě. His school was set ablaze recently and has been closed. Most of Sawadogo's staff has fled to escape the violence.

"When a teacher is killed, no one does anything — so we have to save ourselves," Sawadogo said.

Of 2,869 schools in Burkina Faso, 1,111 have been closed in the last three years as a direct result of Islamic extremist violence.

In Matthew 24:9, Jesus warned Christians that this type of persecution was coming: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." Still, it's chilling to witness it in our supposedly enlightened day and age.

In America and other Western nations, Christians are routinely insulted, marginalized, and called stupid for their beliefs. But in Africa, the Middle East, North Korea, China, and many other places, being a Christian — Catholic or Protestant — can be a death sentence.



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