



## Muslims Shielded Christians on Kenyan Bus Attacked by al-Shabaab Terrorists

Two people were killed and three others were injured when al-Shabaab Islamic militants (logo shown) attacked a bus in Mandera County, northeastern Kenya on December 21. However, Muslim passengers on the bus refused to identify Christians to the gunmen and some even lent their Muslim religious garb to Christians to help protect their identities from the terrorists.



CNN reported that the Muslim passengers were mostly women, and they gave the Christian women their hijabs and helped others hide behind baggage in the bus.

CNN quoted a passenger named Abdiqafar Teno, who said: "Passengers told [the terrorists], 'If you want to kill us, then kill us. There are no Christians here.'"

In a statement to the media, Joseph Ole Nkaissery, Kenya's secretary for internal security and coordination of national government, who is a Christian, said: "We commend the Muslims who stood by the Christians when the gang attacked. They showed the terrorists cannot separate us using religion. They cannot cause a religious war and I thank the passengers and locals."

Nkaissery, who is a retired major general, also urged Kenyans to remain vigilant during the Christmas holiday season to allow for safe festivities amidst terror alerts that have been issued, reported Kenya's online Citizen Digital.

In a telephone interview with the Kenyan Daily Nation, Mandera County Governor Ali Roba, said: "[Muslim passengers] refused to separate from non Muslims and told the attackers to kill all passengers or leave. That is why some locals were injured trying to protect non Muslim passengers."

The *Daily Nation* also quoted Mandera County Deputy Commissioner Julius Otieno, who said:

Initial reports indicate two people have died and three injured. Those injured are the driver of the bus and two passengers. The militants fled after the attack. Our team is tracking the attackers. They were trying to identify who were Christians and who were not. They told the non-Christians to return to the vehicle.

A December 21 BBC report observed that al-Shabaab militants attacked another bus near Mandera last year and killed 28 non-Muslims traveling to Nairobi for the Christmas holidays. The terrorist group also killed 148 people in an attack on Garissa University College on April 2, during which they reportedly singled out Christians and shot them, while freeing many Muslims.

The BBC report noted that Kenya's northeastern region — where Mandera County is located, bordering on both Somalia and Ethiopia — has a large population of ethnic Somalis. Al-Shabab has launched attacks in Kenya ever since Kenyan forces entered Somalia in October 2011 in an attempt to destroy the militants.



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Al-Shabab (whose full name is Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen — meaning “Movement of Striving Youth”) is an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which splintered into several smaller factions after its defeat in 2006 by Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and that government’s Ethiopian military allies. The group has been linked to al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (which aims to overthrow the government of Algeria) and Boko Haram (the terrorist organization most famous for having kidnapped 329 schoolgirls in Nigeria in 2014.)

Back in 2013, this publication’s foreign correspondent, Alex Newman, noted that al-Shabaab stands in strong opposition to Somalia’s government in Mogadishu, which is linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. Newman noted that al-Shabaab has benefited from the extensive arms stockpile supplied to al-Qaeda-linked rebels by NATO during the Libyan “revolution” against Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi. (One can easily see a repeat scenario being played out here, as ISIS has also benefited from arms supplied by the United States to rebels fighting against Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad.)

All of which serves to remind us of several important lessons. For one, merely because a leader of a Middle Eastern country is a “strongman” does not mean that it is in the interests of either Americans or of the majority of the people of that nation to topple that leader by force. Former Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) and his son, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) have made numerous statements critical of U.S. interventionism in the Middle East, and the younger Paul wrote an article published by Politico in 2013 explaining why the United States should not send aid to the rebels in Syria, stating: “Americans would probably be surprised to learn that their government was arming affiliates of Al Qaeda. But this is essentially what President Barack Obama is about to do.”

Recently, another presidential candidate, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas), also took a non-interventionist position, stating that the Middle East was better off before the United States helped depose Saddam Hussein and Moammar Gadhafi in Libya.

While all of these strongmen were/are Muslims (albeit largely secularized Muslims) they also showed a large degree of tolerance toward Christians in their countries. Saddam Hussein actually had a Chaldean Catholic Christian, Tariq Aziz, in a high-ranking position in his government; Coptic Christians enjoyed freedom of religion under Moammar Gadhafi; and even President Obama admitted during a meeting with Orthodox Christian patriarchs at the White House last year that Assad “protected the Christians in Syria.”

These examples, as well as Monday’s case of Muslims in Kenya protecting Christians threatened by Islamic terrorists, serve to illustrate that Christians and Muslims need not be at odds in the Middle East or elsewhere.

This does not mean that there are not many radical Islamic terrorist organizations whose goal is to eradicate Christians and Jews in the Middle East and to wage jihad against the West. Al-Qaeda and ISIS are living proof that such radical Islamists not only exist but are a constant threat to the world.

But another lesson to be learned is that our interventionist foreign policy in the Middle East has only inflamed radical Islamists, toppled strongmen who served to stabilize the region and keep the terrorists in check, and created ill will in the Muslim world; it also aids the terrorists’ ability to recruit more soldiers. As Ron Paul noted in his November 30 article, “The War on Terror is Creating More Terror”:

The interventionists will do anything to prevent Americans from seeing that their foreign policies are perpetuating terrorism and inspiring others to seek to harm us. The neocons know that when it is understood that blowback is real — that people seek to attack us not because we are good and



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free but because we bomb and occupy their countries — their stranglehold over foreign policy will begin to slip.... The world's two most deadly terrorist organizations, ISIS and Boko Haram, have achieved their prominence as a direct consequence of US interventions.

Fortunately, despite the blowback, there are still people in the Muslim world, such as those passengers on the bus in Kenya, who are still willing to extend a peaceful helping hand to Christians.

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