Kenya

Church services in Kenya have been targeted by militant Islamists

“The gun shots in the compound made worshippers run out in panic only to the waiting killers. Using police guns, they rained bullets on fleeing worshippers and many who could not run. Blood could be seen everywhere, furniture strewn all over and worshippers left in shock.” This account of an attack on a church in Garissa in July 2012 vividly illustrates the danger faced by many Christians in Kenya from the militant Islamist group al-Shabaab.

In October 2011 the Kenyan government sent troops across the border with Somalia to fight the group, and since then there has been a spate of gun and grenade attacks on congregations in Kenya. At least 25 people have been killed, including a nine-year-old boy whose Sunday school class was attacked with explosives, and many more have been wounded.

There is also evidence of a concerted Muslim backlash against conversions from Islam to Christianity. It is not unusual for converts to be harassed, threatened and persecuted by their families and Muslim leaders, but pressure on them has increased recently. For example, a convert church was ordered to close within six months, and at least one person has been killed after leaving Islam to follow Christ.

Kenya is more than 80% Christian and has seen massive church growth in recent decades. But Muslims form the majority in some areas, and Christians there may suffer discrimination from individuals and businesses. Muslims are seeking to Islamise these regions, and the new Kenyan constitution allows them their own (Kadhi) courts to adjudicate on matters such as divorce and inheritance.

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