



The War Against Christians in Africa

On September 21, 2013 a shocked world watched as Islamic gunmen attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya targeting Christians, Westerners, and Muslims who were seen as not true-believers. The attack lasted four days, leaving 72 dead, including 61 civilians, six Kenyan soldiers and five attackers. More than 200 people were wounded in this attack.

The Westgate massacre was only part of a larger war against Christians that raged across Africa over the past three years. Stories of atrocities are numerous and horrific. The brutality of these attacks should awaken Christians globally and be a warning to Western leaders that the attack on the American embassy in Benghazi and the later Westgate killing spree were not isolated events, but part of a continuing pattern. Expect more reports of atrocities committed against Christians in the region.

The Islamist terrorists who are committing these atrocities in the name of religion make the Romans who persecuted Christians in ancient times look like 18th-century European *philosophes*. Eventually Rome converted to the powerful message brought by Christians — one that promised peace to the world through the salvation of Christ. These Islamist terrorists are not open to reason or conversion to the Christian message of “love thy neighbor.” These fanatical Islamists seek to impose their beliefs through the sword by bringing death to the infidel unless their narrow interpretation of the Koran is accepted.

The Westgate Horror

The Westgate shopping mall proved an easy target for an Islamist gunman who shot Westerners on sight and rounded up natives suspected of being Christians. When dozens of militants wearing black turbans entered the upscale shopping mall frequented

by Westerners and wealthy Kenyans, the terrorist began firing assault rifles and throwing grenades. Victims included six British citizens as well as others from France, Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, Peru, India, Ghana, South Africa and China.

Witnesses said that the gunman asked shoppers held hostage questions about Islam. Merely stating that one was a Muslim wasn't enough. Terrorists demanded that those who claimed the faith recite verses from the Koran or name the Prophet Mohammed's mother. Those who passed the test were allowed to walk away, while those who could not were summarily executed, children among them. One witness described her experience to the press this way: “I saw people being shot all around me, some with blood pouring from bad wounds. I was just praying, ‘God, keep me alive’ and that my day hadn't come.”

A Pattern of Violence

The Westgate attack caught the world's attention, but behind the headlines were two years of previous incidents of violence in Kenya and across the region that drew little attention in the West. From late 2010 through 2013 at least 15 attacks were launched against Christians, killing 105 people and injuring hundreds of others.

Kenya is 80 percent Christian. Muslims form the majority in some areas. In these areas Christians suffer from discrimination as individuals and businesses. Muslims seek to Islamize these regions, and the new Kenyan constitution allows them their own (Kadhi) courts to adjudicate matters such as divorce and inheritance.

The attacks on Christians revealed a brutality that frightened and shocked the people of Kenya, who remember the horrors of the Mau Mau uprising in the 1960s. Terrorists have targeted priests, teachers, youth

and women. Grenades have been tossed into churches during services, missionaries abducted and raped, pastors assassinated, and Christian schools and churches burned to the ground.

The atrocities committed in Kenya against Christians graphically tell us the kind of war that is being waged against Christians in this poor country. For this reason they are worth recounting:

*September 24, 2010: Six Christian missionaries, including three men and three women, were found traumatized after suffering three days of torture by Islamist terrorists. The missionaries were kidnapped in Nairobi and taken to the countryside, their eyes and mouths tightly sealed with tape. There the women were systematically raped and the men physically tortured. During the ordeal, the missionaries were asked by their captors, "Who is the savior of this world?" When one woman courageously exclaimed, "Jesus Christ is the Savior," she was beaten, spat upon, and told, "You're wrong, you prostitute, it's Osama who's the savior." When finally released, they were told, "You're lucky...we're directed to free you. We could have killed you this night. Maybe your Jesus saves you. But warning...stop leading Muslims astray with your corrupt Bible. Nobody shall be worshipped but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet."

*March 31, 2012: A deadly attack at a church service held at the House of God Miracle Church on the outskirts of the Nairobi central business district left one worshipper dead and 16 others injured. The attack came when the church pastor was concluding the service with a call for worshippers to come to the altar. One terrorist, disguised as a worshipper, hurled a grenade on the pulpit and fled into the streets. When a few worshippers pursued him, he pulled a firearm and began shooting at them. This was just one more incident in the last five years of intensified warfare against Christian churches in the area, a poor district of Nairobi.

*July 1, 2012: Seventeen people were killed in Garissa when masked gunmen sprayed bullets and threw grenades at the Catholic Central Cathedral and Africa Inland Church (AIC) churches. Twelve worshippers including nine women died in these attacks, as did two police officers on patrol in the area. A grenade killed three people in the cathedral, and nine women and two children were killed in the AIC attack. At least four men participated in the assault. A spokesman for the government declared that the attacks were designed to create fear and start a religious war between Christians

and Muslims. One shocked Christian woman exclaimed to the press while holding a bible and hymn book, "Why would they attack a church on Sunday? This is intentionally targeting us. We will fight back, but through prayers not weapons."

*November 6, 2012: After a grenade attack fired from a launcher came through the sheet-iron roof of the Utawala Interdenominational Church during a worship service in Garissa, eastern Kenya, the pastor was killed and 11 others were wounded. Three of the injured had wounds so serious that they were airlifted to the Kenyatta General Hospital in Nairobi. One witness described the grenade landing "right at the podium where the chaplain was delivering a church sermon, hitting him right at the forehead, and he died immediately." The attack was carried out by sympathizers of the terror group al Shabaab in Somalia, where Kenyan forces are involved fighting Islamists.

*February 7, 2013: Two pastors for the Open Door ministry, a persecution watchdog, were shot and one killed in retaliation for reports of Islamic violence. Earlier, Open Door reported that over the last year 22 Christians were killed and more than 100 seriously wounded in Islamist attacks. Following the killing, Open Door released a set of prayer requests for its fallen pastors.

The Westgate Mall attack that occurred seven months later left Kenyans rattled and angry. The burning of a Christian church two weeks later in the Muslim city Mombasa showed that the war against Christians is continuing. "I am afraid that now, Muslims will attack more and Christians will arm themselves and fight back," Paul Komu, a truck driver and Christian, told Reuters after the attack.

The fear that there will be more attacks should be taken seriously. John L. Allen, author of *The Global War on Christians*, writes that "just as Africa is the pacesetter for Christian and Muslim growth, it has also become one of the primary fronts for Christian-Muslim conflict."

An Arc of Islamist Terror

These various terrorist groups operating in Africa, the Middle East and Asia share a messianic goal of imposing Islamic sharia law and theocratic government. It would be a mistake to see these terrorists as just misguided religious fanatics. The AQIM (Al-Qaeda in Islamic Mahgreb) in Somalia has long been involved in drug trafficking and kidnapping Westerners

for ransom. The AQIM grew out of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which was linked with al-Qaeda as early as 2006. By January 2010 this group had established ties with the Boko Haram in Nigeria and a splinter group, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), as well as with the Islamist militant group Ansar Dine (Defenders of Faith), which controls Timbuktu in Mali. A network of leaders and training camps among these terrorist groups is taking shape. One former U.N. official warned as early as 2011 that “you can see on the horizon an arc of terror. It’s not an axis of evil, it’s an arc.”

African jihadists are taking root in a region crippled by poverty, political corruption, unstable governments and strong anti-Western sentiments. Leader of al-Qaeda Ayman al-Zawahiri preyed upon anti-Western sentiment in a region once controlled by colonial European nations when he declared, “We pray to God that they [al-Qaeda-linked groups] will be a thorn in the side of the American and French crusaders and their allies.” Al-Qaeda and its allies are mounting a reverse crusade against non-believers — those who do not accept their distorted readings of the Koran.

What Is Al-Qaeda?

Al-Qaeda inspires and promotes Islamic terrorism in Africa. This global Islamist organization finds its martyr in Osama bin Laden, who organized al-Qaeda in the late 1980s to conduct a global jihad against non-believers, i.e., any person or country that did not accept a strict interpretation of sharia law. Jihad has been waged against non-Sunni Muslims, Christians and Hindus. The organization was responsible for the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists have received training in camps in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq or Sudan.

These ideologues envision a new world-wide Islamic caliphate, a world government ridden of non-believers. They are convinced that a Christian-Jewish alliance is conspiring to rid the world of Islam. They believe the killing of civilians is justified in this world struggle to preserve Islam, or at least their sectarian Sunni interpretation of Islam. As a consequence they have undertaken violence against non-Sunni branches of Islam, including Shia, Sufis, and other alleged heretics. Any interpretation of human rights, international law or national man-made law is denounced by them as a manifestation of evil and denial of Allah.

Before forming al-Qaeda, bin Laden and other leaders were based in Sudan. As a result, they developed strong connections in North Africa. Although direct links with Islamic terrorist groups in North Africa are disputed by some security analysts, it is clear that al-Qaeda has sought to expand its connections in the region, and many jihadist terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic Maghreb in Libya, seek the al-Qaeda stamp of approval. The 2012 Benghazi embassy bombing and the murder of U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were carried out by various jihadist networks led by al-Qaeda, Ansar al-Aharia and other al-Qaeda affiliated groups. They had taken on the al-Qaeda franchise label almost a year before the attack on the American embassy in Benghazi, which brings into question the State Department assertion that an on-line anti-Islamic video produced the mob action in Libya.

In Mali, the Ansar Dine faction reportedly was allied with al-Qaeda by 2013 and is aligned with AQIM. Al-Qaeda places great importance on securing North Africa as a base to further its quest for global domination in the Middle East, Chechnya, Pakistan and eventually the world. Whatever tensions exist between the Sunnis and Iranian Shia, as are being played out in Syria, there is common agreement among these Islamic sectarians that the West and the Judeo-Christian religion are manifestations of Satan in the world. Theirs is a Manichean vision of a battle between good and evil, light and darkness, in which there is no in-between.

Is There an End To This War?

The split between the Soviet Union and China caused a fracture in communism’s global conquest, but not until after millions of people had died under the yoke of Communist regimes. Eventually sectarian splits will occur among militant Islamists in Shia Iran and Sunni al-Qaeda. The question is how many innocent people will be killed, Christian pastors and priests assassinated, students murdered, young girls raped and disfigured in the meantime.

If Kenya and Somalia are any indication, the outrages will continue until the world, under pressure from Christian leaders and the public in the West, stands up and recognizes that Christianity is the declared enemy of these jihadists. Just as Communists took advantage of poverty among the masses and corruption in governments to promote civil wars and revolutions in the name of “social justice,” so have the jihadists in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Leaders in the West sought to negotiate and appease Communist leaders against the

warnings of a valiant few anti-Communists, who were often denounced as “nut-cases” and “extremists.” In the end, the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries collapsed under their own weight when President Ronald Reagan stood up to them. Jihadists are more diffuse and more elusive than any member of the Politburo, but they are no less dangerous and no less bent on global conquest.

Soviet leaders lost faith in their ideology of Communism, a belief system that emerged in the 19th century. Militant Islam has deeper ideological roots. It won't wither as quickly. It is no less divided by sectarianism and national rivalry than were the Communists. Islam does not provide a viable economic or political program that can keep theocratic elites in power for long in a modern world. But we cannot wait around for its inevitable collapse. Christians are being massacred for their faith. Just ask the Kenyans and others who have suffered and died in this war.

War demands that people take sides. Christians are under attack. Sides have already been drawn. Now is the time for Christian world leaders and the Christian community to stand up in defense of their co-religious brothers and sisters in Africa and across the world who are being persecuted, intimidated and murdered for their faith.

March on Washington

JANUARY is Pro-Life month. We commend all of you who make the yearly trip to Washington, DC on January 22 (2014 is the 41st annual march!). We urge you to lobby the legislators and to show a strong, viable Pro-Life presence. Thank you!

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Ann Carey

Veteran journalist specializing in Catholic religious women crises and bioethics

Thomas Brejcha

President and Chief Counsel of the Thomas More Society

For more information, please contact Kevin Haney, Chairman
630-730-7112

MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW

More Reading on Persecution of Christians in Africa

For a searing first-hand account of evil and persecution, we recommend the best-selling book *Left To Tell* (Hay House Publications) by Immaculée Ilibagiza. This valiant lady and seven other women survived the massacres of the 1994 Rwandan holocaust. Through it all she maintained and strengthened her Catholic faith and even offered the gift of forgiveness to the perpetrators of this genocide. This is an inspirational and life-altering book.

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