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Islamic State-Linked Rebels Kill Up to 143 Christians in Congo in Less Than Two Weeks

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"We heard the sounds of violence, and fear immediately took control of us. We had no time to collect our belongings. All we wanted was to escape with our lives."

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Barnabas Aid counts as many as 143 Christians killed by Islamic State-linked rebels in eastern Congo in less than two weeks. The attacks have swept village after village in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, with fighters killing Christians at night with machetes and guns and burning their homes. The toll has not been independantly confirmed, but the pattern is clear.

One survivor, speaking through International Christian Concern, described the moment the night turned.

"We heard the sounds of violence, and fear immediately took control of us. We had no time to collect our belongings. All we wanted was to escape with our lives."

For families that went to bed hoping to wake up to another ordinary morning, local civil society leader Justin Paluku said, "the night turned into a nightmare of unimaginable suffering."

The attackers are the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), former Ugandan rebels who now operate as Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP). They work mainly in North Kivu and Ituri, near the Uganda border, in the same corner of Congo fighting the worst Ebola outbreak in the country's history. The Cantine health centre was treating Ebola patients when it was attacked, and the patients fled into the open.

Congo Christians Killed: The Attacks In Cantine, Mabiolo And Mambasa

The timeline reads like a map of terror drawn village by village. On 26-27 October, six Christians were captured and beheaded in Mbutoha, Ituri. On 2 November, 15 were killed and 20 homes burned in Maputu.

On the night of 5-6 November came the worst single attack: Cantine, where Islamic State's own media claimed at least 60 dead. Justin Paluku gave a provisional figure of "more than 30".

On 8 November, 21 were killed in Mabiolo, Lubero. In the week of 13 November, at least 44 civilians were killed in Mambasa territory, according to AFP.

Added together, Barnabas Aid reaches a figure of up to 143 Christians killed in less than two weeks. The Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, cited by The Tablet, puts it at at least 140 in two weeks. Neither figure has been independently confirmed.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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