

Kenyan Christians alarmed by increased persecution from militants in region

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [January 7, 2015](#) issue

Church leaders say attacks by Somalia's al-Shabaab militants in the northeast region of Kenya are increasingly taking on an anti-Christian tenor, including targeted executions of non-Muslims.

At a news conference in Nairobi in mid-December, the leaders said Muslims must redouble efforts to preach religious tolerance and end youth radicalization.

In what the leaders describe as a dangerous trend, 64 Christians were executed in or near Mandera, a town on the border with Somalia, in two incidents in the past three weeks. In both incidents, non-Muslims were separated from Muslims.

On December 2, militants shot 36 quarry workers. The militants asked workers to recite the Shahada, the Muslim profession of faith, and shot those who refused.

On November 22, al-Shabaab militants hijacked a bus and killed 28 non-Muslims, 21 of them teachers returning home for Christmas.

"This situation regrettably leads us to conclude these attacks, perpetrated by people claiming to be al-Shabaab, are taking a religious angle," Anglican archbishop Eliud Wabukala said at the news conference.

Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, and evangelical African Inland Church leaders said Kenya had witnessed more than 20 attacks this year alone, which had left more than 200 people dead and many others injured. The attacks, which initially targeted Christian places of worship, now target Christians on public transportation and in workplaces, according to the leaders.

"They must move beyond merely condemning the attacks to initiating practical steps to reach out [to] the sympathizers of terror and help us build bridges between faiths and communities," Wabukala said.

Catholic cardinal John Njue said that although recent executions displayed religious patterns, Kenyans should avoid statements that further divide the country along religious lines. —Religion News Service

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