

10 villagers beheaded by 'Islamic jihadis' in Mozambique



Women carry water home in Mozambique.

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Ten people, including women and children, were decapitated in the East African nation of Mozambique by suspected Islamic jihadis, government officials have said.

The attack came on Sunday in the Monjane village in the Cabo Delgado province, which has large oil and gas reserves and ruby and sapphire deposits.

Government officials have declared that at least two children and four women were among those beheaded. AFP reports that the children killed were boys ages 15 and 16.

National police spokesman Inacio Dina told a news conference in Maputo that the suspects used machetes and have not yet been arrested. However, a manhunt is underway.

“There are 10 citizens who have been hideously killed,” Dina

said. “[W]e will hunt and find them and take them to the court as happened with others.”

Although there has been no definitive confirmation, the attack is believed to have been carried out by a radical Islamic faction that has carried out an insurgency and other attacks in the province in the last year.

The group is called Ansar al-Sunna but is also known locally as al-Shabab. The group has no relation to the Somalia-based terror group that has the same name.

A local resident of Manjane village told AFP that the village leader was one of the victims of the attack.

“They targeted the chief as he had been providing information to the police about the location of al-Shabab in forests,” the unnamed resident said.

Al-Shabab is believed to be responsible for attacks on police stations and a military post in the town of Mocimboa da Praia in October. Last October’s attacks were believed to be the first terrorist attacks in the country and lead to the death of two police officers.

According to BBC, police have arrested over 200 people connected with the string of terror attacks since last October.

“A number of independent assessments of the situation in Cabo Delgado conducted over the last three months have concluded that the security situation (there) remains fragile and continued attacks probable,” Alex Vines, an analyst on Mozambique who works for the London-based NGO Chatham House, told AFP.

The BBC notes that recent academic research has shown that early members of al-Shabab were followers of a radical Kenyan cleric killed in 2012.

The attack comes after the Mozambique Parliament passed a new anti-terrorism law earlier this month making punishments of terror-related time stiffer.

“This attack is a worrying sign of the deterioration of the situation,” Eric Morier-Genoud, a lecturer in African history at the Queen’s University Belfast, told the Nigerian news outlet Vanguard. “On the one hand the rate of attacks appears to intensify, on the other hand, the methods seem to be radicalised, with decapitations becoming more and more common.”