

Christian missionary tortured by ISIS in prison, led 40 to Christ



Originally published in [God Reports](#)

Charged with being a spy, Czech missionary Petr Jasek endured a 14-month imprisonment in Sudan where he was tortured by fellow cellmates. But Jesus supernaturally imparted peace during his confinement and he became a bold witness, winning many to Christ.

In his role as the Africa regional director for Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), Jasek went to Sudan to document the persecution of Christians, which was happening in the Nubah Mountains in clashes between the government and rebels.

He was detained by the Sudanese police at Khartoum Airport in December 2015. It seems immigration staff found a duplicate passport Jasek carried for security purposes, which led to his immediate arrest and imprisonment.

“I arrived at this cell at about 1:30 am,” he told VOM. He found the cell overcrowded, with people covering the floor.

“They had to squeeze a little bit so they would create some small room for me to lie down on the floor.”

The conditions were sparse. “I had no blanket...two extra T-shirts and one extra pants and a toothbrush, toothpaste and soap; that was all.”

Guards refused him blankets or a mattress, because he was from the Czech Republic and they told him they thought he should be used to cold weather.

At 5:30 am he was awakened by the Islamic call for prayer. All six of his cellmates began praying fervently. “They showed me a place behind them where I was supposed to stand while they were praying. The rule is that me as a Christian, I had to stay behind them so they would not look at me while they are praying.”

After the prayers, they identified themselves as DAESH, the Arabic acronym for ISIS. All his cellmates were ISIS fighters!

“Two days later they started to openly torture me and beat me...I was hit with their fists into my face many times. They called me ‘filthy pig’ or ‘filthy rat.’”

One of the ISIS fighters barked an order: “Filthy pig, come here.”

“I decided at first I would not respond to these rude names and when I did not respond I got hit with a wooden stick they unscrewed from the sweeper that was there to clean the floor.”

Jasek was hit on the head, shoulders and fingers or they kicked him in the stomach and back with their boots. “At that time I was really thinking about the Lord Jesus what He had to go through when He was arrested and they also were beating Him with a wooden stick and were ridiculing Him, slapping Him.

“I became like their slave,” he told VOM. “I was really [made] to wash their clothes, wash all the dishes, clean the toilet

with my bare hands. They were just making fun of me. I did not resist.”

“I could clearly see the Lord Jesus and how He suffered for us.”

Then Jesus imparted something to him that was amazing and unexpected, considering the circumstances. “I received a wonderful peace at that time and surprisingly, when I was physically attacked I was experiencing the greatest peace in prison time ever, all these 14-1/2 months.

“I could even pray during these beatings for my family members, I could pray for other fellow prisoners and I was not moved to the point when I used to be before, because I had this peace from the Lord at this time of the physical attacks on my body.

When Jasek began to exalt and glorify the Lord’s name during his beatings, this made them even more furious. “They decided to torture me even in much worse way.

“Eventually, they decided to do waterboarding to me. It’s a way of torture where a person lays on his back and they cover his mouth and pour water, which gives you the feeling that you are getting drowned.

The Sudanese guards had not intervened to stop Jasek’s torture, because they were intimidated by the ISIS fighters. “It is [thought] that if these Islamists get released they will get revenge on those guards.”

Jasek didn’t have access to a Bible during his captivity, so he meditated on Scriptures he memorized as a young person.

“I was literally asking the Lord that He will keep my mind sound and that I wouldn’t lose my mind through the situation,” Jasek said. “The Holy Spirit kept reminding me some of the verses that I had memorized. This was just enough for me, to

give me enough strength everyday to pray," he told VOM.

He also thought about Jesus' teaching about loving enemies. He was startled when he heard his abusers weeping late at night when they could not sleep.

"They were crying. They were also missing their family members. They were also crying to God for help," he recounted. "That allowed me to easily continue to pray for them. I was praying for those fellow prisoners, the interrogators, for the guards, for the prosecutors and for the judge, that the Lord would reveal Himself as the Lord, Savior and God."

Remarkably, one of the guards intervened to prevent the waterboarding. Jasek said he felt the Lord used the guard to move him out of the cell.

"Later on I told the guard that he saved my life and we became close friends," Jasek said. "I gave my email address and I started to share the Gospel with him. He was very passionate. I told him that if he ever makes it to Europe, he can stay at my house and we will take care of him."

Then Jasek was moved to another prison where conditions were even worse.

"We were squeezed in a small room – 15 by 18 feet. There were sometimes 40 of us. That was the situation and I was able to lead 40 Eritrean refugees to Christ," he said. "It was like new revelation for me. I started to be courageous and openly shared the Gospel with other fellow prisoners. Later on, that resulted in them putting me in solitary confinement again."

Shortly after being placed in solitary confinement, Czech consular officers were able to bring him a Bible.

"I didn't have to do anything else but read the Bible all day. I could not read the Bible all day because I could only read when there was enough light, which was about 8 [a.m.] ... until

4:30 p.m. I had to stand reading on the bars so that I could have enough light. I was so hungry for Scripture. I read from Genesis to Revelation within three weeks.”

Jasek noted that he gained a profound “new understanding of Scripture.”

He was eventually removed from solitary confinement and moved to a larger prison that can hold about 10,000 people.

“I went from solitary to a cell where there were like 100 people in one cell,” he explained. “We were squeezed. There were 75 beds. Only 75 could have a bed and 25 had to stay on the floor.”

Amazingly, guards at the new prison allowed him and two incarcerated Sudanese pastors to hold worship services.

“The first day I came to the chapel to spend time in Scripture with the Lord. They asked me to preach. I would preach once a week, sometimes twice a week,” Jasek said. “Of course, they were monitoring us and they were reporting what we were teaching about. There were two other pastors from Sudan and we knew that nothing worse could happen to us.”

Preaching in prison allowed Jasek and the other pastors to witness to “people that were hopeless.”

“They were real criminals – murderers, rapists, thieves, drug dealers. It was such a wonderful time,” Jasek said. “They responded to our teaching. We were just teaching the Gospel. It was so wonderful to see the changed life of those who dedicated their lives to Christ.”

In February 2017, he was granted a presidential pardon and Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir ordered his immediate release. He returned to the Czech Republic on February 26, 2017.

During the time Jasek was interrogated by the jihadis in

prison his wife was in a Bible study back home and the leader stopped the study to pray for the “situation that he is right now in.”

“They stopped reading and started to pray for the Lord’s presence over the situation,” Jasek said. “When I came home, I realized that was exactly the time when I was on my knees before the Islamists and they were beating me. But I was experiencing a supernatural peace.”

“I came for four days to Sudan. But I was there 445 days,” Jasek told VOM. “When you think about all the hardships and seeing what the Lord was able to do through us, then what else can we say but the Lord’s ways are much better than our ways.” “We know from the words of Apostle Paul that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. I felt like I received my life back. I was first threatened to be sentenced to be executed. [Then] later on, life imprisonment. Then, my life was returned back to me. I told the Lord, ‘My life does not belong to me anymore. It belongs to the Lord.’”

Algerian Christian released after serving prison sentence for insulting Islam



Slimane Bouhafs.

Originally published in [World Watch Monitor](#)

The daughter of Slimane Bouhafs, an Algerian Christian who has spent the last 18 months in prison for insulting Islam and its prophet, has announced her father's release.

"Finally my father ... has been allowed back to us," his daughter, Tilelli, wrote on her Facebook page on Easter Saturday. "Thank you for your support."

Algerian newspaper El Watan reported that Tilelli and her mother had been on their way to visit him in prison when he called, saying that he had been released and was about to take a taxi home. Tilelli reportedly told him to wait, after which they picked him up and travelled home together.

"I am filled with joy to be reunited with my family, who have suffered tremendously," El Watan reported Slimane Bouhafs as saying. "It was too much... I suffered a terrible injustice. I did not hurt anyone, I did not kill anyone. I was deprived of my freedom unfairly."

He added that he had "seen unbearable things in prison" and thanked people from all over the world for sending him letters of support.

Who is Slimane Bouhafis?

Slimane Bouhafis, 51, a convert from Islam, was arrested on 31 July 2016 for posting a message on social media about the light of Jesus overcoming the “lie” of Islam and its prophet. He also published photos showing the execution of a civilian by an Islamist terrorist.

He was adjudged to have insulted Islam, the state religion in Algeria. The penal code provides for a penalty of three to five years in prison, along with a heavy fine, for such an offence. Bouhafis was initially given the maximum sentence, before it was reduced to three years and then, following a presidential pardon, further reduced.

However, the family’s request for parole in October, owing to Bouhafis’ ill health, was rejected.

A source who preferred to remain anonymous told World Watch Monitor at the time of the initial sentencing that a five-year sentence was “severe in view of a rather minor offence”. Such comments on social media are common in Algeria without usually triggering the wrath of the authorities, the source added. In January 2017 a court in Bouira (100km east of Algiers) sentenced another Algerian Christian to a year in prison for items he posted on his Facebook page, adjudged to be insulting to Islam and its prophet.

During his incarceration, Bouhafis spent time in three different prisons. Initially he was imprisoned in the northern city of Setif, but was then transferred to Constantine and later Jijel, despite the family’s request that he be moved to Béjaïa – in the Kabylie region where he is from and where there is a relatively large Christian community.

While in prison, his health deteriorated due to his inflammatory rheumatism, a disease that worsens under stress and requires a special diet. He also reportedly suffered aggression from his fellow prisoners because of his Christian

faith.

Protests

Bouhaf's family protested against the verdict, supported by Algerian and international human rights groups. His daughter Tilelli stressed that her father had only shared someone else's posts on Facebook, adding: "I wonder why there is this rage against my father, who did not have a high profile on Facebook."

Another daughter, Afaf, described her father as a man who had always defended the interests of his country from a young age. She said he is known for his commitment to democracy and religious freedom in all his writings published on his Facebook page.

According to Said Salhi, vice-president of Algerian League for Human Rights (LADDH), the verdict was "part of an escalation" and a result of "abusive" use of article 144 (bis) of the Algerian law.

In October 2016, a crowd gathered in the northern city of Tizi Ouzou to lobby for Bouhaf's to be allowed access to medical treatment.

They also called for a change to the law that punishes anyone deemed to have insulted Muhammad or "denigrated the dogma or precepts of Islam".

In May 2017 the LADDH organised a rally in support of Bouhaf's in Béjaïa's city centre. In a statement the group said the Algerian government had been responsible for "repeated violations of human rights and freedoms" and demanded "the release of all detainees of political or religious opinions".

Bouhaf's conviction was seen by some as a means of silencing him because of his political activism. He belongs to a movement for the self-determination of Kabylie (known as MAK), a separatist group not tolerated by the authorities. MAK

activists are regularly harassed and arrested.

Nigerian church leaders urge Good Friday prayer for release of Leah Sharibu



Originally published in [CBN News](#)

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is asking Christians to pray for the release of Leah Sharibu on Good Friday.

Leah is believed to be the only schoolgirl still being held by the Muslim terror group Boko Haram after the group released 107 students kidnapped from a boarding school.

The girls who were freed last Wednesday said Leah was not released because she would not renounce her Christian faith.

Nigerian Christians will begin prayers at 12 noon (7am Eastern

Daylight Time in the U.S.) on Good Friday.

CAN is asking believers to pray for God to send His angels to deliver Sharibu from captivity.

The president of the association, Rev Samson Ayokunle, said, "...the leadership of CAN is calling on every Christian nation-wide to stand in the gap for that innocent girl, Leah Sharibu, at 12 noon on Good Friday, asking God to send His Angels to deliver her from the captivity as He did for Apostle Peter who was jailed unjustly."

Pressure against Christians is ramping up in Algeria



Cathedral of Algiers. (PHOTO: World Watch Monitor)

Originally published in [Mission News Network](#)

Several events in the last few months indicate that Christians in Algeria are facing growing pressure from the government and

society.

At the end of last year, a long-term resident of Algeria was denied re-entry into the United States. This Christian worker, a French national, managed a private French-language school in-country. [Middle East Concern believes](#) these types of deportations are a tactic to ensure that outside groups are not able to work with Algerian Christians.

Around that same time, [three Christians were arrested](#) in Chlef and accused of luring Muslims into conversion through promises of travel and financial benefits. A local newspaper described the event as a “foiled evangelism attempt”.

[Earlier this month](#), a pastor who was accused of evangelism had his prison sentence lengthened and was charged a hefty fine.

And the pressure isn't just focused on individuals, either. There's been a string of church closings as well. On March 2, another [church was shut down](#) – the fourth church to be closed in the past four months. More and more churches have been inspected and threatened with demands to meet safety regulations.

Why the increased pressure?

We spoke to Greg Musselman of the [Voice of the Martyrs Canada](#) regarding recent religious freedom issues in Algeria. He says there's a very good reason why the opposition is increasing – to keep up with Church growth:

“You've had issues where there is a fear amongst the Islamic leaders there, and I guess even the population to some extent, of the way that Christianity is growing in that part of the world. So you have a situation where there is growth – we've seen that in other places around the world. And then what starts to happen is pressure is then applied on the government and those that are more militant in their Islam [faith] get very concerned about the growth of Christianity.”

And so, even though many of these churches have been registered, approved, and operating for years, the government is finding ways to shut them down. This also means no one has been allowed to plant new churches, Musselman says. So they gather in house churches to stay under the radar. But there's pressure to shut these meetings down, too.

"Again you see these things happening because of the growth of the Gospel. That then causes you know, some ... real soul-searching from the Christian leaders. Are they going to abide by what the government's telling them, or are they going to continue to spread the Gospel?"

And yet, as Christians face adversity, they begin to grapple with questions about what it means to live out their faith and what it means to take up their cross to follow Jesus. This leads to a deepening of their faith.

Pressure from society

However, it's not just the government who is giving Christians a hard time. Musselman explains that conversion from Islam to Christianity creates a lot of heat among families and communities.

"That becomes engrained within the culture. Again, you're dealing with various levels of militancy when it comes to Islam. I mean, we know many Muslims that are very peaceful. They are fine with having Christians in their neighbourhoods, and even churches. Where it does get a little bit tricky is when family members start to convert to Christianity.

"And all through the Muslim world, including Algeria, North Africa, the Middle East, and many Muslim nations, there has never been a time in history where more Muslims are converting to Christianity."

He says there are many stories of Muslims having dreams or visions, or coming to Christ because of a message they heard on a radio or television broadcast. There are also cases of

one-on-one evangelism and Bible distributions being the key to Muslims hearing about Jesus.

“Where it starts to get tense is when people are leaving Islam and becoming followers of Jesus. And again, that’s one of the issues that’s happening in Algeria which is why Islamists start to take note of this and say ‘Nope. This is a Muslim country.’”

Another reason why Christianity might be looked down upon from both a societal and governmental level is because it is often viewed as a Western religion. Musselman says that many within this nation want to see Sharia law upheld, and Christianity is a big threat to that.

Some Christians will have to leave their home in order to escape violence from their friends and family.

Prayers for Algeria

Voice of the Martyrs Canada supports persecuted believers by advocating for them to the government. They also surround believers and encourage them with truths from Scripture and provide for their needs.

Another way they help is to tell the stories of the persecuted to people like you, and ask you to pray. Musselman says we need to consider Hebrews 13:3 and 1 Corinthians 12:26 when we think of believers facing trials like this.

And while persecution in Algeria isn’t always violent in nature, it has potential to do great harm:

“The reality is is that when there’s this kind of pressure on, it intimidates the Church and it causes people to become more inward in their faith and not to share it. And again, we need to be wise. The Bible does tell us that. But on the other hand, we also want to be praying for our brothers and sisters that they would not be intimidated.”

More than 100 captured Nigerian girls freed with a warning to their parents



People carry banners calling for the rescue of the Dapchi school girls during the visit of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari in Dapchi. (PHOTO: Reuters)

Originally published in [Fox News](#)

African terrorist group Boko Haram has released almost all of the 110 girls abducted from a Nigerian boarding school last month witnesses said, but it came with a warning: "Don't ever put your daughters in school again."

The militants rolled into Dapchi, Nigeria, around 2 a.m. in nine vehicles and the girls were left in the centre of town, witnesses said.

Democrats

Ba'ana Musa, a resident, told the Associated Press that extremists said, "This is a warning to all of you."

Extremists reportedly told residents they "did it out of pity. And don't ever put your daughters in school again."

Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden" in the Hausa language.

Nigeria's government said 101 of the 110 schoolgirls have been confirmed freed and that the number "would be updated after the remaining ones have been documented."

"No ransoms were paid," the information minister, Lai Mohammed, said in a statement.

The girls were released "through back-channel efforts and with the help of some friends of the country, and it was unconditional."



The exterior of the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Nigeria where over 100 girls were abducted last month.

must act to stop Islamists from subjugating whole of Nigeria

Click [here](#) to read a summary of the in-depth paper that the influential National Christian Elders Forum of Nigeria (NCEF) – which speaks on behalf of all Christian groups in Nigeria – released last week .

Family members were en route into town Wednesday morning.

“When I get there we will do a head count to see if all of them have been released,” said Bashir Manzo, whose 16-year-old daughter was among those kidnapped February 19.

Manzo confirmed to the Associated Press that his daughter was among those freed.

“As I speak to you there is jubilation in Dapchi,” he said.

Residents in Dapchi fled on Wednesday morning upon hearing that Boko Haram vehicles were headed toward the town.

“We fled but, from our hiding, we could see them and surprisingly, we saw our girls getting out of the vehicles,” Umar Hassan told the AP.

Boko Haram horrified the world when it abducted 276 girls from a boarding school in Chibok more than four years ago. While [some escaped and many others were released](#) as part of negotiations, about 100 remain with their captors.

Some girls were forced to marry their captors, and many had children fathered by the militants.

The release of the Dapchi girls comes a day after an Amnesty International report accused the Nigerian military of failing to heed several warnings of the imminent attack last month. The military has called the report an “outright falsehood.”

Nigeria’s government celebrated the girls’ release. “GREAT NEWS from Dapchi, Yobe State. Thank God for the safe return of our sisters. Alhamdulillah!” an aide to President Muhammadu Buhari, Bashir Ahmad, said on Twitter.

Algeria government criticised over heavy fines for transporting Bibles



In November 2017, local authorities in Oran closed a church for “illegally print Gospels and publications intended for evangelism”. (PHOTO: World Watch Monitor)

Originally published in [World Watch Monitor](#)

The Algerian government has once again been criticised for alleged discrimination against the country’s Christian minority, this time by handing large fines to two brothers for carrying over 50 Bibles in their car.

Prosecutors claimed the Bibles were to be used for proselytism, though the brothers said they were for church use only.

The Protestant Church of Algeria (known by its French acronym, EPA) issued a statement to the press denouncing the

“intimidation” of Nouredine and Belabbes Khalil. This follows the recent [closure of several of the denomination’s churches](#).

The EPA is a federation of 45 Protestant churches, mostly in Algeria’s northern coastal region, officially recognised by the government in 1974.

The two men were each fined 100 000 dinar (US\$900) on March 8 by a court in Tiaret, about 300 kilometres southwest of the capital, Algiers.

The brothers’ case goes back to March 2015, when their car was pulled over by the police. They were arrested for carrying 56 Bibles, and interrogated about where the books came from and what they were going to do with them.

They said the Bibles were for their church community, which Nouredine leads, so the police released them and returned the books. However, the case was later referred to a prosecutor and the legal action against them commenced.

In December 2017, they were each sentenced to two years in prison and a 50 000-dinar fine (\$450). But at their appeal hearing on March 8, the judge overturned the jail sentences, instead giving them suspended sentences of three months each. However, their fines were doubled.

World Watch Monitor understands that the men were convicted under Algeria’s 2006 law regulating non-Muslim worship, which forbids the printing, storing and distribution of materials intended to “shake the faith” of a Muslim.

There have been several similar cases in recent years that have been frozen. There are concerns that these cases will now be revived.

The EPA has assigned a group of lawyers to help the two men make a further appeal against the March 8 verdict.

Nigeria Christians want ICC to investigate Air Force 'complicity' in 'genocide'



More than 3 000 properties were destroyed, including 10 churches, on December 4 2017. (PHOTO: CAN)

Originally published in [World Watch Monitor](#)

Six Christian communities in north-eastern Nigeria have announced their intention to take the national Air Force to the International Criminal Court (ICC) over its alleged bombing of their communities in December.

Lawaru, Dong, Nzoruwe, Pulum, Kodomti and Shaforon – in the Demsa and Numan Local Government Areas of the Adamawa state – allege that the Nigerian Air Force was “complicit” in the massacre of at least 86 people, as they fired rockets at villages where Fulani herdsmen were attacking Christians on

December 4 2017.

Amnesty International said last month that 35 people died as a direct result of the air raids and accused the Nigerian military of a “shocking disregard for the lives of those it supposedly exists to protect”.

In a statement released on Friday March 9, the Christian communities accused the Air Force of “clear human rights abuses” amounting to “genocide” and of aiding the herdsmen in killing, destroying homes and displacing many, including women and children, from their ancestral homes.

“The December 4 2017 attacks have shown a clear manifestation of complicity by government and security agencies,” said the statement, signed by six representatives of the affected communities and read to journalists in Yola, the capital of Adamawa state, by spokesman Lawrence Jonathan.

“The Numan attacks have thus become the first time in the history of Nigeria that Nigeria Air Force drones, helicopters and fighter jets provided aerial cover for Fulani terrorists to kill many people and destroy property on behalf of a terror group.

“The hidden narrative in this case is that the herders were avenging the killings of their kith and kin and [were] ‘assisted’ with such unlawful excessive use of force [so the] communities [would] learn a bloody lesson.”

The Nigerian Air Force’s Director of public relations, Air Vice Marshal Olatokunbo Adesanya, has previously denied that the Air Force was responsible for any damage to the communities.

But the Christians’ statement said the Air Force was only trying to cover its tracks.

“Although Amnesty International reported that it was not

possible to establish how much of the deaths and destruction [were caused] by the direct result of the air attacks or attributable to the attack by herdsmen, eye-witness accounts and rocket [remains found] after the raids clearly established the facts,” it said.

“We [will] spare no efforts to bring justice to those killed by the genocidal attacks against our people by the Nigeria Air Force, even if that means going to the International Criminal Courts to cause further investigations into the human rights abuse and for the whole world to know the truth of what happened.

“Our situation is beyond farmer/herdsmen clashes because [the Air Force] cannot come into the situation and bomb people being attacked, killing, maiming and destroying their buildings. Our problem is different; there’s a general plan of genocide against our people [the Bwatiye ethnic group] and that is why we want Nigerians and the world to know.”

The statement included a table, based on eyewitness reports, attributing deaths to either Air Force bombings or “Fulani terrorists”:

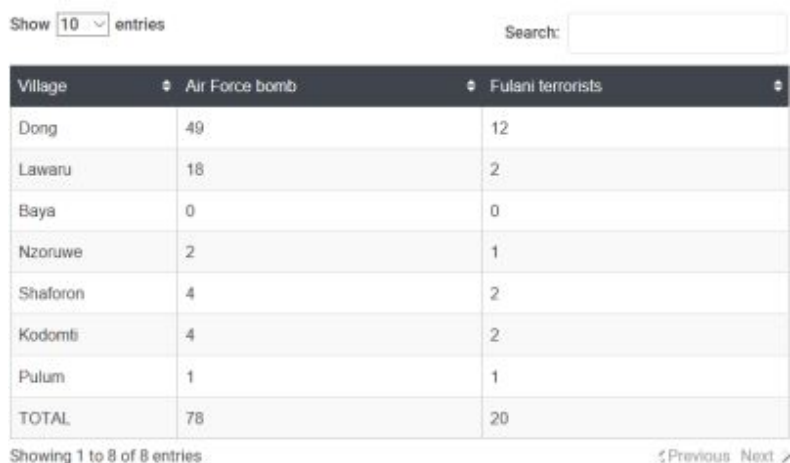


Table with 3 columns: Village, Air Force bomb, and Fulani terrorists. The table lists 8 rows of data, including a total row. The table is part of a web interface with a search bar and pagination controls.

| Village | Air Force bomb | Fulani terrorists |
|----------|----------------|-------------------|
| Dong | 49 | 12 |
| Lawaru | 18 | 2 |
| Baya | 0 | 0 |
| Nzoruwe | 2 | 1 |
| Shaforon | 4 | 2 |
| Kodomli | 4 | 2 |
| Pulum | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 20 |

Click [here](#) for an enlarged image.

Underground Somali churches reach out to persecuted orphans



Originally published in

[Christian Headlines](#)

Orphans in Somalia whose parents were killed for their faith by Islamic extremist, Al Shabaab rebels are becoming more numerous – and hungrier, an underground church leader said.

The pastor started a care center for the orphans three years ago in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, as more children of secret Christians were orphaned.

“Last year we lost a Christian family killed by the Al Shabaab, and the number of children rose from 30 to 35,” he said. “The Al Shabaab are now hunting down the children in Mogadishu, and we have moved the care center to a bit safer location.”

The leader has taken the children in because they had nowhere else to go, but he lacks resources to take care of them – the

Christian orphans are crying for food, he said.

“The children look devastated and malnourished, so we as a secret church do appeal to our brothers and sisters in the free world to consider extending a hand to these persecuted children,” the pastor said.

The children receive little support from Somalia’s impoverished underground Christian community, and their needs are increasing as some have begun attending school, he said.

“If we can get at least \$1 000 (R 11 900) a month, that will really lighten our burden,” he said. “Please pray for the future of the Somalia underground church. The orphaned children will form the future of Somalia’s underground church.”

The death penalty for apostasy is part of Islamic law according to mainstream schools of Islamic jurisprudence, and Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda adhere to the teaching.

Somali law and societal tradition create an atmosphere of hostility toward non-Islamic faiths similar to that created in regimes that execute apostates. The country’s Provisional Federal Constitution (PFC) does not explicitly prohibit Muslims from converting to other faiths, but leaving Islam remains socially unacceptable in all areas, according to the U.S. State Department’s latest Report on International Religious Freedom.

The PFC provides for the right of individuals to practice their religion but prohibits propagation of any religion other than Islam, and it makes Islam the state religion. All laws must comply with the general principles of sharia (Islamic law), the report states.

The past few years Al Shabaab has lost ground to government and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping forces.

Rebels from Al Shabaab, which is allied with Al Qaeda, in February 2017 [shot to death](#) an underground Christian woman and her son and seriously wounded her husband. The family was asleep at their home at dawn in Afgoi, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) west of Mogadishu, when at least four armed men attacked them shouting the jihadist slogan, “Allah Akbar [God is greater],” and, “We cannot allow the defiling of our religion with a foreign, Western religion,” according to the wounded husband.

The assailants killed his wife, 35-year-old convert Faduma Osman, and the couple’s 11-year-old son, Ahmed Suleiman. The couple’s two daughters, 13 and 7, and their 9-year-old son were able to escape out a backdoor.

Somalia is ranked third on Christian support organisation Open Doors’ 2018 World Watch List of countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian.

Rwandan government closes 700 ‘noisy’ churches



A closed church in Kigali, featuring

a picture of arrested Bishop Rugagi Innocent. (PHOTO: [BBC](#)).

Originally published in [Faithwire](#)

Approximately 700 Churches have been shut down by the Rwandan government for failing to comply with noise restrictions. Most of those closed by officials were small Pentecostal congregations located in Kigali, but one mosque was also ordered to stop hosting services.

There has been an increase in charismatic individuals starting up small churches, claiming the ability to perform miracles. Citing the dangers of this type of practice, a new law now requires all preachers must have theological training before opening a church.

Some church premises reportedly exposed worshippers to unnecessary risks and could “cause danger to those worshipping,” according to government official Justus Kangwagye, as reported by the BBC. Kangwagye told the BBC’s Focus on Africa that the Churches were required to meet “modest standards” with regards to training and noise limits.

In an announcement on Feb 21, the Rwanda Governance Board said it was seeking to review the original governing laws for Churches due to “irregularities” in the way various congregations functioned.

“Some churches conduct their worship services in shoddy and unclean structures; to the detriment of people’s health and safety. Cases of noise pollution have also been reported while some operate without the required operation permits,” said Prof Anastase Shyaka.

She added: “Some Churches are torn apart by internal wrangles, this should not continue. If we are Christians, where we worship must meet standards showing respect for God.”

Despite the sudden closures, Lutheran Bishop Evariste Bugabo insisted that the closure order “does not target any denomination.”

“It is a matter of hygiene and security for the church members,” he said, as reported by Religion News Service. “While churches have mushroomed too quickly in Rwanda, those that have met the requirements are safe.”

“Are these boreholes that give people water?” asked President Paul Kagame in a critical remark about the number of churches in the city. “I don’t think we have as many boreholes. Do we even have as many factories? This has been a mess,” he added.

Rwandan international development David Himbara argued that Kagame is keeping a tight grip on religious freedoms in the East African nation.

“Kagame tightly controls the media, political parties, and civil society at large,” Himbara wrote at Medium. “The churches constituted the last open space. Kagame knows this. The localised community of churches offered a slight space for daring to imagine and talk about change.”

Himbara expanded on the vital importance of Rwanda’s small congregations.

“In Rwanda’s context, churches meet their members’ spiritual, emotional and physical needs in these troubling times under Kagame’s dictatorial and traumatising regime. Under the Kagame regime, many Rwandan churchgoers are struggling to make ends meet in their everyday lives. They are poor, unemployed or earn exceedingly low wages. Irrespective of church size, each Rwandan church provides some meaning, counselling, and outreach services to its members.”

While Kagame cited “hygiene” concerns in the running of the Kigali churches, Himbara believes something else is at play here.

“The hygiene justification for closing churches is bogus,” he wrote. “The entire Kigali City is unhygienic – with open sewers running through homes and neighborhoods. A city of over one million, Kigali does not have a sewage system. There is no treatment plant – raw sewage is dumped into the national and regional water systems.”

“The real reason Kagame shut down Rwandan churches is fear and paranoia,” Himbara said.

Authorities have also arrested several pastors during the crackdown. The well-known Bishop Innocent Rugagi of Redeemed Gospel Church, Apostle Charles Rwandamura of the United Christian Church (UCC) and Pastor Fred Nyamurangwa of Celpar Church were all taken into custody for failing to comply with the new restrictions put upon their congregations, as reported by KR Press.

Rev Emmanuel Ntambara, Pastor James Dura and Pastor Emmanuel Kalisa Shyaka were also detained. Rwandan police spokesman Theos Badege told news agency AFP on Tuesday the six Pentecostal preachers “conducted illegal meetings with bad intentions aimed at calling for the directives to be defied.”

“After the suspension of churches that did not meet required standards, some church leaders began illegal meetings intended to defy and obstruct the directive,” he added.

“Police began investigations to find the masterminds behind this illegal act.”

12 Christians murdered in Nigeria for trying to protect girls from forced Islamic conversions



Men stand among rubbles in the village of Bakin Kogi, in Kaduna state, northwest Nigeria, that was recently attacked by suspected Fulani herdsmen. At least 13 people have been killed in clashes between Christian and Muslim youths in central Nigeria in the latest violence to hit the region. (PHOTO | Stefan Heunis | AFP via [Daily Nation](#)).

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At least 12 Christians have been killed and another 20 injured in Kasuwan Magani in northern Nigeria in retaliation for believers' attempts to rescue Christian girls from forced Islamic conversions.

Morning Star News reported on Tuesday that radical Muslims hunted down Christians and burned down their homes after they had attempted to rescue two girls who were kidnapped and forcefully converted to Islam two weeks ago.

“The names of those killed are not readily available to me at the moment, but I can confirm to you that they are Christians killed in the Christian area of the town,” said James Madaki of the Evangelical Church Winning All.

The victims also included members of Pentecostal, Baptist, Assemblies of God and Seventh-day Adventist churches in the town.

“The case was reported to the police, and the girls were not rescued, so some Christians decided to rescue the girls, but the Muslims in the town attacked them,” Madaki explained.

“The Muslims did not just attack the Christians that went to rescue the girls, but also went around town attacking Christians they sighted and burned houses belonging to Christians.”

Omega Funom, another Kasuwan Magani resident, confirmed that the violence came as a result of the girls’ kidnapping.

“This is the practice by Muslims in Kaduna state. They abduct small Christian girls and force them to become Muslims, and when Christians reject this, they attack them to create the impression that there’s a religious crisis,” Funom said, adding that the Muslims were armed with AK-47 guns.

The Rev. John Hayap, spokesman for the Christian Association of Nigeria, Northern Nigeria Chapter, said that the Nigerian government has failed to step up in several cases of forced conversions carried out by Muslims.

“I feel very sad about such violence on Christians, but what more can we do than to pray and ask for God’s intervention.

We'll continue to preach peace and tolerance in our churches no matter the level of provocation from our Muslim neighbors," Hayap said.

AFP separately reported that 13 people have died in what police have said are clashes between Christian and Muslim youths.

"The mayhem led to the death of 13 people with many houses and shops burned," Kaduna state police commissioner Austin Iwar said.

Twenty suspects connected to the violence have since been arrested, with police and troops sent to the area to restore peace.

Iwar said that there are conflicting stories behind what sparked the violence.

"We don't want to jump into conclusion as to what led to the mayhem. The speculation was that some Christian boys were not happy that their girls are befriending Muslim boys," he added, though the description does not correlate with Christians' accounts.