Christianity crackdown: Five churches burned as terrorist group open fire in Nigeria

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More than 100 members of the terrorist group Boko Haram stormed the predominately Christian town of Garkida in Gombi area, opening fire on townspeople and setting fire to churches and houses. At least five church buildings were destroyed in the attack, including two houses of worship belonging to the Church of the Brethren domination, an Anglican Communion church, and a church and separate office of the Living Faith Church. The number of casualties from the attack is not yet known.

The Boko Haram terrorists, who seek to impose sharia (Islamic) law in Nigeria, arrived riding on about 60 motorcycles, with two men on each bike carrying AK47 rifles and RPGs - that fire rockets.

20 mounted gun trucks followed, according to the campaign group Save the Persecuted Christians.

The attack took place from 7pm and extended well into the night, with locals reporting the Islamic extremists finally left the town at midnight.

News of an impending attack by Boko Haram first reached the Christian town at at about 1pm on Friday, prompting many residents to flee.

Those who remained were said to have fled into hiding in the surrounding bushes upon sighting the Boko Haram invaders.

One eye witness said: “People ran to hide inside the mountains while they watched their houses being burnt by the insurgents.”

The attackers then held the town for hours, ransacking and looting buildings.

A local resident told the Daily Trust the insurgents overpowered police and vigilante defenders before burning a police station, police barracks, church buildings, a hospital, a health centre and several homes.

The militants abducted a number of Christians during the attack, local media report.

Some residents were angry the Nigerian armed forces did little to prevent the attack.

Manasseh Allen told the Morning Star News: “In spite of all the local intelligence reports on the afternoon of Friday, after the terrorists were sighted around Kwarangulum in Chibok Local Government Area, which is close to Garkida, no effort was made by soldiers stationed in the area to preempt the attack.

“I feel very sad about this.”

The Nigerian security forces are believed to have initially fought the attackers but were forced to retreat.

Order was restored on Saturday with military personnel seen patrolling Garkida’s streets.

Adamawa Police spokesman Suleiman Nguroje confirmed the attack.

He said: “We have received a report that there is an attack in Garkida, and we’ve mobilised personnel to the area.”

Although the Nigerian government claims to have defeated Boko Haram militarily, the terrorist group and its offshoot Islamic State West Africa Province continue to carry out attacks in Borno.

Nigeria ranked 12th on Open Doors’ 2020 World Watch List of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution, but second in the number of Christians killed for their faith behind Pakistan.