**Lynching Of Christian Man By Muslims Is Sign Of Chaos In Central African Republic**

February 9, 2014

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Washington Post

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/lynching-of-christian-man-by-muslims-is-sign-of-chaos-in-central-african-republic/2014/02/09/ecd02e54-91d5-11e3-b3f7-f5107432ca45_story.html>

BANGUI, Central African Republic — Polin Pumandele was killed about 9:30 a.m.

He was a Christian walking in a Muslim enclave, carrying wood to sell. In these tense days, that is enough reason to die in the Central African Republic. A Muslim mob confronted Pumandele, 23, on a side street and pushed him around. Then, they threw him into a ditch. At least one man stabbed him before his throat was slit.

As the slaughter unfolded, some of his killers ordered a Washington Post journalist witnessing the attack Sunday to leave. “Allez, allez — go, go, ” one yelled, wagging his arms menacingly.

Stationed nearby was a group of Burundian peacekeepers, ordered by the United Nations to protect civilians. But they didn’t know about the killing until some men — perhaps his killers — brought Pumandele’s mutilated body past them in a wheelbarrow. They dumped his body outside the Red Cross office across from the Burundian base. And just as swiftly, Pumandele was taken to the morgue, adding to the rolls of the dead in Africa’s latest war.

At least nine other people were killed Sunday in and around the area where Pumandele died, according to human rights activists and aid agencies. Christians killed Muslims. Muslims killed Christians. Shops were burned down. Houses were looted. Bodies were burned in streets, in front of African peacekeepers. Some tried to stop the looters; others looked the other way. In all, Sunday’s events were the latest sign of the mayhem in this besieged capital, reeling from one of the worst episodes of sectarian violence on the continent in recent memory.

Pumandele was a victim of circumstance. Half an hour before he was killed, heavy gunfire erupted near the Grand Mosque, near the Red Cross office, in PK 5, one of the last remaining Muslim enclaves in the capital. Muslims accused three Christians — Pumandele and two friends — of carrying grenades and seeking to hurl them into the mosque. The Burundian soldiers took into custody two of the men, but Pumandele ran in the other direction. There were no grenades, the Burundians later said. All the youths had was fear. Pumandele simply ran the wrong way.

Within minutes, the mob had caught up with him.

Like so many deaths here, Pumandele’s end was the beginning of more sadness, more anger and possibly more violence.

At the morgue, his relatives arrived to escort his corpse back to his home. They placed his body, wrapped in a white medical sheet, inside a wheelbarrow. Then they placed a colorful African cloth over his body, as if to bring some measure of dignity to Pumandele’s last journey.

His brothers, sisters, other relatives and friends walked through the streets, behind the wheelbarrow. They cried, held hands. Others wailed.

“The Muslims did this,” one of his relatives screamed. “They cut his neck like a cow. They are going to kill all of us.”

People stepped outside their houses. Cars slowed.

As the somber procession reached Pumandele’s neighborhood, more of his friends and neighbors joined. The wailing grew louder, as did the recriminations.

“All the Muslims will die in the country,” vowed one woman, shrieking loudly.

And as Pumandele’s body arrived in his neighborhood, a dirt-poor, mostly Christian community, one man yelled, “We have to burn a Muslim and eat him.”

Pumandele’s body was taken inside his small house. His father, Gilbert, seemed confused by his son’s unexpected demise. “He’s a civilian,” he said. “He doesn’t own a gun. He doesn’t carry a knife. Why? Why?”

It was a question no one in the crowds outside could answer. They possessed only anger and blame. The war had reached their home. Pumandele, they said, was the first in their community to be killed by the sectarian violence.

Some blamed the roughly 6,500 French and African soldiers, authorized by the U.N. Security Council, for being unable to protect their community. Others blamed the nation’s politicians, whose government collapsed after a coup in March by Muslim Seleka rebels, who tormented the majority-Christian population. That prompted the rise of the anti-Balaka, Christian vigilantes who are targeting Muslims.

“We want PK5 to be completely disarmed,” said Kisito Ngoni, 38, a neighbor.

“Let’s take his body to the United Nations office,” suggested Aime Neka, 32, Pumandele’s uncle. “We’ll demonstrate there until they find a solution to the violence.”

In the end, though, as at so many other funerals, Pumandele was remembered for the youth he was. Mourners described him as polite, smart and a lover of soccer. His favorite team was FC Barcelona; his favorite player, the Argentine Lionel Messi.

Two hours after Pumandele’s body arrived, it was dressed in black pants and a blue-and-yellow shirt. A piece of cloth was neatly wrapped on his neck to cover the gaping wound from the knife that killed him. Women wailed and caressed his peaceful face, so peaceful that he looked as though he were asleep. His relatives, friends and neighbors sang church songs and clapped in a mournful rhythm.

At his feet, a candle burned. And behind the house, his grave was ready.

As he watched the ritual of mourning, Raymond Laguerret was worried. The faces of Pumandele’s young friends and family members were angry. For Laguerret, the chief of the community, they were an omen.

“I don’t know if our youth will calm down,” he said in a low voice, shaking his head. “There will be revenge attacks, and it will get worse. Any Muslim who comes into our area will be killed. Any kind of cooperation between Muslims and Christians is not possible anymore.

“Everything is going wrong.”