

SOMALIA

Christians Fear Militant Islam at Home and Abroad

There are thought to be no more than a thousand Christians in a resident population of 8 million people, with perhaps a few thousand more in the diaspora. The Islamist Shabab militia, which controls most of southern Somalia, is dedicated to hunting them down. Not attending mosque arouses suspicion. Bibles are kept hidden. There are no public meetings, let alone a church. Catholic churches and cemeteries have been destroyed.

Al Shabab, an Al Qaeda-linked terror group in Somalia, has sought to rid the region of Christians and is specifically targeting Christian converts from Islam. Many Somali Christians, having fled persecution in their homeland, have found little security in neighboring East African countries. Even in the Christian-majority country of Kenya, radical Islam is steadily gaining numbers and influence. The shaky transitional government led by Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, is unlikely to speak up for any of its citizens caught with a Bible. Though professing moderation, he promotes a version of Sharia law whereby every citizen of Somalia is born a Muslim and anyone who converts to another religion is guilty of apostasy punishable by death.

- A 46-year-old woman shot dead near the town of Jilib after a Swahili-language Bible was found in her shack; a 69-year-old man killed near a port south of Mogadishu after Shabab fighters found 25 Somali Bibles in a bag he was carrying;
- Two boys, aged 11 and 12, who were beheaded by the Shabab after their father refused to divulge information about an underground church.
- Hundreds of Somalis may have been killed for being Christian since the Shabab arose in 2005
- In August 2009, International Christian Concern reported that four Christians working to help orphans in Somalia were beheaded by Islamist extremists when they refused to convert to Islam.
- Due to the ongoing civil war in the southern part of the country, professing Christians in Somalia have no protection. Thousands of displaced Somalis live in refugee camps in Dadaab.

*From Anglicanplanet, see link below for more extensive information:

<http://anglicanplanet.net/international-news/2009/11/30/almost-expunged-somalias-embattled-christians.html>