

Christians Hunted Down as al-Shabab Kill 147 in Kenya

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Description: Students evacuated from Garissa University listen to an address by Interior Minister for Security Joseph Ole Nkaissery before they are transported to their home regions from a holding area on April 3, 2015.



Students evacuated from Moi University listen to an address by Interior Minister for Security Joseph Ole Nkaissery before they are transported to their home regions from a holding area on April 3, 2015. Kenya's interior minister vowed that the country would not bow to terrorist threats, a day after the massacre of 147 students by Somalia's Al-Qaeda-linked Shebab fighters. AFP PHOTO / CARL DE SOUZA
CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/Getty Images

Carl de Souza—AFP/Getty Images Students evacuated from Garissa University College listen to an address by Interior Minister for Security Joseph Ole Nkaissery before they are transported to their home regions from a holding area on April 3, 2015.

“If you were a Christian you were shot on the spot. With each blast of the gun I thought I was going to die”

At least 147 people have been killed and 79 wounded in the Thursday's attack on a Kenya university, according to the Kenya National Disaster Operation Centre. The centre says security forces have rescued more than 500 students from the Garissa University College campus but fighting is still going on.

For the past two weeks intelligence agencies in both Uganda and Kenya have issued warnings of possible terrorist attacks by the Islamist group al-Shabaab. The alerts urged caution about going to venues popular with westerners in Kampala, and vigilance around major infrastructure projects or universities in Kenya. Those warnings bore fruit just before dawn on Thursday as masked militants stormed a university dormitory complex in the Kenyan town of Garissa, launching grenades and firing guns.

President Uhuru Kenyatta released a statement urging Kenyans to “stay calm as we resolve this matter,” and extended his condolences “to the families of those who have perished.” He begged Kenyans to “provide the authorities with any information they may have in connection with any threats to our security” while announcing that the government had commenced the “appropriate deployment” of security forces. Reports from Garissa show that Kenyan tanks are heading to the sealed off university area, and that the militants have gathered on the roof, preparing for a violent showdown even as hostages huddle inside.

Earlier on Thursday, student Collins Wetangula told the Associated Press that when the militants stormed his dorm, he could hear them demanding if residents were Muslim or Christian. “If you were a Christian you were shot on the spot. With each blast of the gun I thought I was going to die.”

“All I could hear were footsteps and gunshots nobody was screaming because they thought this would lead the gunmen to know where they are,” he said. “The gunmen were saying sisi ni al-Shabab (Swaihi for we are al-Shabaab).”