

## RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON THE 9 FEBRUARY 2024

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### DISCLAIMER

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. All COI Query Responses are compiled in line with the Common EU Guidelines (2008) and the EUAA Methodology (2023). This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. Please refer to all documents cited.

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### COI QUERY RESPONSE

#### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO – INFORMATION ON THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

*CE Noticias Financieras* in February 2024 reported that “The Central African franchise of the Islamic State for Central Africa (ISCAP) has assumed the decapitation, in several attacks, of 50 Christians in the Democratic Republic of Congo, within the strategy of genocide carried out by this terrorist group against the followers of this religion in order to achieve their disappearance.”<sup>1</sup>

This document further states that “The jihadist gang then said it had killed “more than 35 Christians in a bloody attack by Islamic State fighters in the province of Beni, in eastern Congo. We stormed the Christian village of Mkundi, located on the Butembo-Beni road, at night. We attacked Christian gatherings inside the village simultaneously with guns and knives, resulting in 35 dead and wounded. We burned the houses and properties of Christians inside the village and abducted some of them before they returned to our positions.” (ibid)

*Open Doors UK* in January 2024 states “A year after a church bombing by Islamic militants killed 15 Christians, this church community in Kasindi, DRC, continue to praise God.”<sup>2</sup>

A report issued by *Open Doors International* in January 2024 states that: “In the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), notably in North Kivu, the situation for Christians has become increasingly perilous due to the presence of armed groups like the “Alliance for Democratic Forces” (ADF-NALU). This group, which has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS), has been particularly aggressive in targeting Christians. The scale of attacks is alarming: Christian villages have

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<sup>1</sup> CE Noticias Financieras (3 February 2024) Islamic State beheads 50 Christians in Congo

<sup>2</sup> Open Doors UK (25 January 2024) DRC church resilient after bomb attack kills 15

been burned down, pastors, priests, and lay Christians have been abducted, and untold suffering has been inflicted on Christian communities by the ADF and other armed factions.” [...] <sup>3</sup>

*Business Mirror (Philippines)* in January 2024 mentioned “Throughout 2023, more than 130 Catholic priests and religious were either arrested, kidnapped, or murdered, according to a new report on Catholic persecution published by Aid to the Church in Need.” <sup>4</sup>

This document further notes “Other murders linked to persecution included that of Father Pamphili Nada in Tanzania, who was killed by a mentally unstable man; Father Javier García Villafaña, who was shot dead in Mexico; and Father Leopold Feyen, who was stabbed to death in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” <sup>5</sup>

*Impact News Service* in November 2023 reported “At least 26 people were killed on 24 October in a Christian area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Extremists attacked residents in the town of Oicha with machetes. An estimated 5,500 have lost their lives in anti-Christian violence in DRC since October 2017.” <sup>6</sup>

The *International Christian Concern (ICC)* in November 2023 points out that “ADF terrorists held hostages and brutally murdered 40 others people at a secondary school. “Make no mistake—the ADF is an Islamic terrorist group on a quest for global Jihad. The ADF militants spread terror throughout the DRC through murderous rampages on Christian villages, all while espousing extremist propaganda and forcing victims to join their cause.” <sup>7</sup>

Under the heading “Murdering Christians with Impunity” the report mentioned that “Despite these devastating attacks, very few arrests are made, and police often refuse to acknowledge any violence, with reports detailing police's refusal to send forces to the scene of a crime, even multiple days after an attack. Murders, kidnappings, burning buildings, forced conversion of religion are daily practices of ADF militants, with many of their victims identifying as Christian.” <sup>8</sup>

The report further states “ADF has killed hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals in Christian areas, including pastors.” <sup>9</sup>

In October 2023 *Open Doors UK* reported that “Christians in the town of Oicha in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are reeling after at least 30 believers, including children, were killed in recent incidents.” <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Open Doors International (17 January 2024) World Watch List 2024: Situation of Religious Freedom for Christians - Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Summary Report

<sup>4</sup> Business Mirror (Philippines) (14 January 2024) Report: Over 130 Catholic priests, religious arrested, kidnapped or murdered in 2023

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Impact News Service (9 November 2023) Updates on the persecuted Church 7 November 2023

<sup>7</sup> International Christian Concern (ICC) (1 November 2023) Persecutors of the Year 2023: The Annual List of the World's Top Oppressors [Allied Democratic Forces excerpt

<sup>8</sup> ibid

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> Open Doors UK (26 October 2023) Christians in DRC in 'despair and disillusionment' after spate of attacks kills at least 30 believers

This report further points out “On Tuesday (24 October), armed men stormed Masosi, a Christian neighbourhood in Oicha, North Kivu province. “When the people heard gunshots at the beginning, they thought thieves had come into the village, which is not unusual,” shares Mumbere, a local Christian youth leader. “But when the cracking of bullets lasted for an hour, they then knew it was the ADF [Allied Democratic Forces, which has links to so-called Islamic State.]” Christians were killed as they began to run for safety. Those who could not flee were burnt in their houses. At least 26 bodies, including those of 12 children, have been identified, but the death toll may be higher with many Christians reported missing. Shops were also looted. Masosi has been emptied of its population, with most fleeing to safer neighbourhoods. “ [...]

“Two days earlier, on Sunday (22 October), Mumbere Kafukuliro and Mbambu Ndalya – both from the Pastoral School in Oicha – were killed on the way to their farm. Whilst on 4 October, it emerged that Pastor Mbusa Lisasi, a father of six, and his brother Kakule Lisasi had been killed after they had been kidnapped on the way to their farm on 30 September.” <sup>11</sup>

Under the heading “Doubt and Despair for Christians” the document notes that: “The Christian population of Oicha is in despair and disillusionment,” says a field source. “They are losing hope. It is said that during the protest, some Christians questioned the safety God promises His children.” <sup>12</sup>

*Aid to the Church in Need International (ACN)* in June 2023 states “On May 31, Islamic State claimed responsibility for an attack (believed to have been conducted by members of ADF which pledged alliance to Islamic State in 2019), in which nearly 20 Christians were killed. The militants reportedly stormed the village of Bulongo in North Kivu province after dark, “pillaging homes, murdering inhabitants that crossed their path and setting fire to six vehicles”.<sup>13</sup>

The document also notes that: “On 22 June, more than 10 Christians were killed near the village of Makisabo, Beni, when the Islamist extremist group ADF ambushed three vehicles. According to reports, the militants “blocked the road, shot all the passengers, and set the vehicles on fire”. A local bishop stated: “We know the war situation in Congo is complex, but we cannot ignore the fact that the rebel groups are targeting Christians. We have evidence that the killers have established ties with [the] Islamic State (ISIS), and survivors have confessed to us that they were asked to recite the shahada if they wanted to survive. We have pastors that have been killed for refusing to deny Christ and get Islamized. We are asking for prayers and support to take care of millions of refugees, widows, and orphans.”. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> Aid to the Church in Need International (ACN) (22 June 2023) Religious Freedom in the World Report 2023: Democratic Republic of Congo

<sup>14</sup> ibid

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