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https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/05/article_3150010.html/ - Uganda and Kenya authorities have scaled up security in recent days in response to warnings from Western countries that a jihadist group is planning to attack churches in Uganda.

The U.S. embassy in Uganda warned that churches there may face "specific threats" from Al Shabab, a Somalia-based militant Islamist terrorist group. The threats against the two East African countries are said to be due to each having peacekeeping troops in Somalia.

"All the churches have been informed. The anti-terrorist police and police board in Uganda are providing security to the churches. There are further efforts to inform the people on what the explosives may look like so that they can identify them. We are especially concerned about the situation based on what we have seen happening in Kenya," Rev. Mead Birungi of World Shine Ministries told World Watch Monitor during the International Convention on Healing of the Nation last week.

On May 21, a grenade attack a few metres from a mosque in Garissa, close to the Kenyan border with Somalia, is believed to have killed one and injured 11. No one yet has claimed responsibility. On May 16, 10 people were reported killed and more than 70 people injured in Gikomba, a market in the capital city, Nairobi. Three people died and 86 were injured during a twin blast May 5 along Kenya's busy Thika highway.

Some Western countries such as Great Britain, the United States, France and Australia have issued travel advisories concerning Kenya, based on the threats from Al Shabab. British tourists in particular have abandoned travel plans to Kenya or have returned home.

"The influx of guns and other dangerous weapons into the country is alarming," Cardinal John Njue, chairman of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, said May 9. "Suddenly, Kenyans cannot go to places of worship without fear. A country that has for years been called the oasis of peace in the region has become a terrorist playground."

In Uganda, reports of Al Shabab threats bring back memories of twin attacks in Kampala in July 2010 that killed more than 80 people. For the most part, however, Christians and Muslims have lived peacefully together in Uganda.

"As a Christian, I feel that the threat to churches is an issue of orientation. Some people are simply bad and hide behind religion to settle scores. There is no possible justification for taking another's life," said a resident of Kampala, who asked not to be named.

The sentiment is shared by Birungi, who said the Interreligious Council in Uganda has been working with the majority Christians and other religions to raise their voices against any possible attack.
