

In Cameroon, faith leaders fear expansion of extremism from Nigeria

by [Ngala Killian Chimtom](#)

February 26, 2012

Yaounde, Cameroon (ENInews)--The campaign of violence in Nigeria carried out by the Islamist sect Boko Haram has raised fears of religious extremism gaining a foothold in Cameroon, its neighbor to the east.

Secular and religious authorities have warned against following a group that has been responsible for an estimated 450 killings in 2011 and has stated it wants to replace Nigeria's secular government with Sharia, or Muslim, law to address poverty and injustice. In the latest incident, four policemen were shot to death on 23 February in the northern Nigerian towns of Kano and Minna, where the people are now "gripped by fear," according to the Times of Nigeria.

The president of the Cameroon Association of Imams, Sheik Ibrahim Mbombo Mubarak has said he is concerned that some Moslem leaders have welcomed the "hate doctrine," and have allowed Boko Haram faithful to preach in their mosques.

He noted there is a connection with Cameroon. "The number-one and number-three strongmen of the sect (Mohamed Nour and Mohamed Kahirou) are from Cameroon ... So they came back when they were chased from Nigeria and have been spreading their recorded messages and ideology," he said during a meeting with administrative authorities in Douala, Cameroon's commercial center.

He said he believes regulation of religious groups might be an answer. "Religions are practiced without any authorization and that's how these extremist movements are gaining ground in Cameroon," Mubarak said. Regulating the

sector would have made it difficult for such hate groups to establish themselves in a country that prides itself on maintaining long periods of peace, he explained.

Cameroonian state radio reported that the Lamido of Garoua, a Moslem leader, exhorted the faithful to "stick to the basics of Islam ... We understand our Islam and we don't heed those who think they understand this religion better than us."

In a similar warning note, the Archbishop of Douala, Msgr. Samuel Kleda, said during an ecumenical service for peace in Cameroon that the Boko Haram doctrine is "anti-social ... it is against the abiding love of our savior," according to a local weekly newspaper, Timescape Journal.

Cameroonian scholar Gilbert L. Taguem Fah, writing in a recent book about new Islamic dynamics in the country, said that there is a danger Boko Haram could spread its "extremist, intolerant and violent ideology" to cities as far south as Douala, which he said is an important center of Islamic expansion.

Political leaders have said they are concerned that poverty in Cameroon, where 40 percent of the population lives on less than one dollar per day, could make Boko Haram attractive to many people, especially in the north.

A visit to Lagdo, in Cameroon's far north, revealed that villagers have seen people with long beads and red or black headscarves (outfits that Boko Haram followers wear), in the area.

"They came here and told me that all our problems are caused by Western education and Western ideas," a resident of Lagdo, Oumarou Djam, told ENInews, casting a furtive glance around. "They also said they will give me a lot of money if I joined their group. They looked dangerous, so I lied that I would consider their proposal. I am afraid that they may come again," he said.