

# Global Christian leaders denounce attack on Sudan Presbyterian Church

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(ENInews)--Global Christian leaders are condemning the destruction on April 21 of the Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church Bible School in Khartoum, an incident that occurred amidst escalating hostilities between Sudan and South Sudan.

Nearly 500 people, said to be members of a fundamentalist Islamic group, attacked the church compound in the West Gerief district of the Sudanese capital, burning Bibles and destroying and looting property. The attack has since increased fear among Christians in the north.

"We express a grave concern over the increasing incidents of attacks on Christians and destruction of Church property in Sudan," said the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) general secretaries in a joint statement on April 24.

The organizations reported that security forces have also taken over the Sudan Council of Churches premises in the town of Nyala in Darfur province, where another conflict between government and rebels is occurring. The official confiscated vehicles and bicycles, according to the organizations.

"We regret to note that despite the rhetoric about freedom of religion and protection of the minorities by the government of Sudan, threats and discrimination against Christians in Khartoum and its environs are increasing," said the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary, and the Rev. Andre Karamaga, the AACC general secretary.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) said it was about to issue a call to prayer on Sudan, when the organization received information detailing the burning and destruction, according to the Rev. Setri Nyomi, general secretary.

Nyomi said on April 24 the Sudan Presbyterian Church's moderator, the Rev. James Par Tap, wrote that before the attacks, Ansaar Alsoona, a fundamentalist Islamic group, had announced "al-jihad" against Christianity and its members attacked the school and church.

With the attack, some Muslims apologized to Christians saying the actions did not represent the spirit of Islam. In solidarity, some Muslims joined Christians for prayers in the church compound and condemned the incident.

At the same time, church organizations warn that similar groups to the one that burned the church are marauding in Khartoum and being encouraged by the inflammatory speeches by Sudan government leaders.

The two nations are embroiled in a dispute over oil and borders that is threatening to develop into full scale war. South Sudan broke away from Sudan last July, after a two-decade-long civil war.

"We call on all sides to exercise restraint and pursue peace at all costs. God is on the side of those who seek peace," said Sudan Anglican Archbishop Deniel Deng Bul.

As the hostilities increase, refugees have begun streaming into Kakuma, the refugee camp in Kenya where many lived during the civil war, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.