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BOKO HARAM DECLARED FATWA ON A SOUTHERN EVANGELIST AND FAMILY

Report by Emeka Thompson

Nigeria's militant and Islamist group Boko Haram has declared a fatwa on a popular southern evangelist Peter Falade and his entire family for what they called "an illegal Christianisation" of Bornu State. The news broke after the deadly attack by the terror group on a crusade ground organized by the Evangelist's church. Several residents and other ministers were killed during the attack on July 15, 2018, at Bio, Bornu state.

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Nigeria's militant group, working in concert with Fulani herders, is actively fighting to overthrow the governments of the Northern States in order to create the Islamic States where the Sharia law will rule. The vicious attack on the Christian crusade in Biu, Borno State, where scores of people were killed many others wounded, is another among many atrocities committed on the Nigerian populace by the terror group in recent years.

Boko Haram and its splinter faction, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) , have continued to attack civilian, humanitarian, and military formations this year, reportedly killing at least 207 civilians in the first half of this year alone. It is increasingly difficult to protect civilians, even in government -controlled areas. In June, three rockets-propelled explosives fired from outside Maiduguri killed four people and injured three others in the city, an area previously considered relatively safe given the strong Nigerian army presence.

One of our reporters spoke to one of the residents in the area, Malam Muhammad speaking in the local dialect, said, that" Pastor Falade has a fatwa, on his head, and that of his family as the shouting from some members of the terror group keep shouting that the fatwa must be carried out", Malam Muhammad said the group accused the Evangelist of Christianisation in Biu and Borno State. He said they dropped leaflets in and around the state, pronouncing the fatwa on the man of God.

Our reporter who travelled to the evangelist's hometown in Ologe, Oye Local Government, Ekiti State, where we believe the Evangelist and his family resides, but only a burnt-out structure was met.

An elderly neighbor described how the house was burned down by suspected Fulani herdsman a few weeks earlier. It's not clear if any members of the family were home when the attacks took place.

The incessant attacks against civilians in the Northeast and spreading throughout the country have led to calls for president Muhammadu Buhari to dismiss his army chiefs and put more effective security structure to save lives. The Nigerian authorities should prioritize civilian protection and stop forcing people to return to areas where they risk further harm. Too many civilians are dying , and it's time the Nigerian state worked harder to protect them.

