

News: At least 14 civilians killed in communal violence in Metekel Zone; regional police detain 28 suspects

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Victims of Saturday's attack were brought to Bulen Primary hospital

By Siyanne Mekonnen @Siyanne

Addis Abeba, July 12/2021 – At least 14 civilians were killed in Metekel zone of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State in what eye witnesses described as communal violence over the weekend; 17 more people were also injured and at least 30 are missing.

Reports received by Addis Standard indicate that the killings of civilians took place by group attacks launched at a market place following the killing of an elderly man in the Emanji Kebele of Metekel zone on Friday July 9.

According to multiple eyewitnesses who spoke to Addis Standard, the attack was in retaliation to the killing of the elderly man by an "unidentified armed group." It took place in Kebele 02 of Bulen woreda on Saturday morning where different communities living in the zone travel to take part in a Saturday market.

Gembir Betish, who lost his 15-year-old cousin Abebe Kulash in the attack said that, "a gunfire was launched against the people who were gathered at the market," he told Addis Standard by a phone. "It took over an hour before it was quelled by the arrival of members of the command post." The whereabouts of about 30 people is still unknown, Gemir said, recalling how several people scrambled to flee the attacks while some hid in the houses of residents they knew in the Kebele.

Gembir also hinted at the involvement of woreda level officials in the attack. He expressed his frustrations with the federal government. "The government should break the silence on the attacks and put a stop to it," he remarked, "All Ethiopians should condemn the repeated attacks on our community. It is adding to our grievances. We have no one to speak on our behalf."

Dr. Jallela Adbo, a medical doctor at Bulan Primary Hoslital on his part said that a total of 14 people including a one year old child were confirmed dead at the hospital

A senior police commander in Metekel Zone told Addis Standard that 28 people were arrested so far suspected of involvement the attack. When asked to identify the perpetrators and the exact number of casualties, the police officer declined to comment saying the investigations were still ongoing.

Dr. Jallela Adbo, a medical doctor at Bulan Primary Hoslital on his part said that a total of 14 people including a one year old child were confirmed dead at the hospital. Three of the victims were women while 11 were men according to the doctor; 15 others were admitted to the hospital for injuries. Dr. Jallela also explained that two of the injured who sustained heavy injuries were referred to Pawi hospital but couldn't be transported due to security concerns.

Following the unrest, the zonal command post imposed curfew and restriction of carrying arms in and around Bulen Woreda. The curfew restricts movement from 7 PM to 6 AM and prohibits carrying all types of weapons by anyone other than authorized security personnel.

The attacks came days after the Benishangul Gumuz regional government appointed 25 former members of an armed group in zonal and woreda leadership positions. In ongoing effort to bring peace in the Metekel zone, which has seen sustained violence over the course the last one year, the regional government also provided training for members of the unnamed armed group and held reconciliation ceremonies in different Woredas. AS

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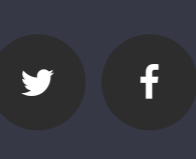
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