At least 14 killed in attack on Burkina Faso church

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At least 14 people were shot dead in an attack on a church in eastern Burkina Faso on Sunday morning, the government said.

The identity of the gunmen was not immediately clear and further details on the attack had yet to emerge. Burkinabe armed forces were caring for the wounded and searching the area, the government said in a statement.

This year an Islamist insurgency has ignited ethnic and religious tensions in Burkina Faso, rendering large parts of the country ungovernable, especially in northern areas bordering restive Mali.

The attack took place in the village of Hantoukoura near the border with Niger in the Est region, an area known for banditry that has come under attack over the past year from suspected jihadist groups with links to al Qaeda and Islamic State.

On Nov. 6 gunmen opened fire on a convoy of buses carrying mine workers in the Est region, killing 39.

The timing of the latest incident, during hours of worship, mirrored other attacks on Christians this year — a new phenomenon in a West African country that has long prided itself on its religious tolerance.

Burkina Faso was once a pocket of calm in the region, but the past year’s violence has killed hundreds and forced nearly a million people from their homes.