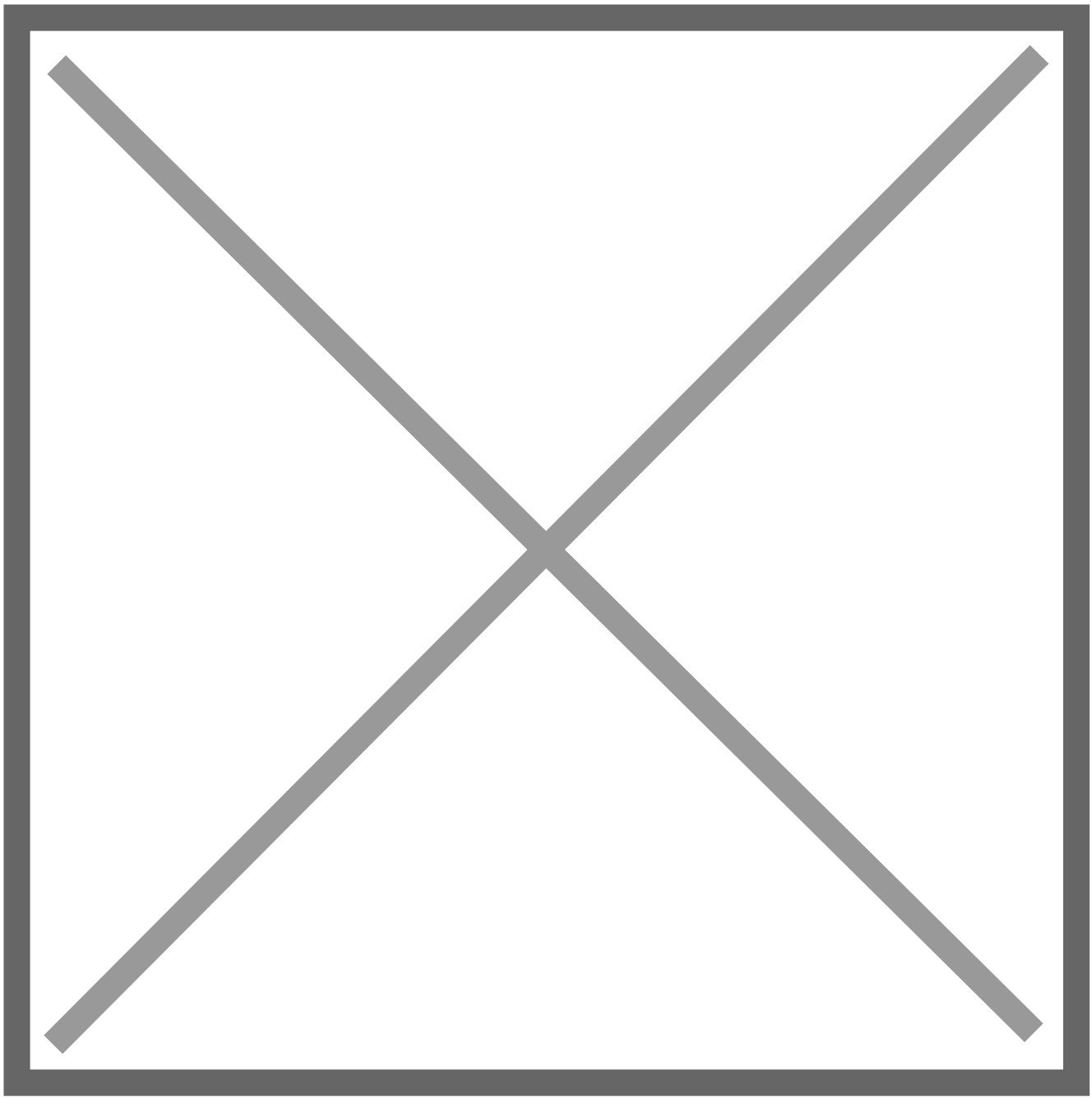
News



St. Louis de Montfort Church in Meza, northern Mozambique, is seen in this undated photo. The historic Catholic church was targeted in an April 30, 2026, attack by extremists linked to the Islamic State group, which has carried out violence against both Christians and Muslims in the region since 2017. (OSV News/Courtesy of ACN)

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MEZA, Mozambique — May 6, 2026
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A Catholic church in northern Mozambique was targeted in an attack by the Islamic State group that has carried out attacks against Christians and Muslims in the country since 2017.

According to the pontifical charity Aid to the Church in Need, extremists attacked the historic St. Louis de Montfort Church in Meza, a town located in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, on April 30.

The attack destroyed the church, offices and residence where the Piarist missionaries who serve at the parish lived, while a church-run kindergarten school was vandalized.

"It was a scene of terror. Homes, infrastructure, all destroyed, and the historic parish reduced to rubble. Civilians were captured and forced to watch and listen to speeches of hatred," Bishop António Juliasse Ferreira Sandramo of Pemba said in a message to ACN.

The church, ACN reported, was founded in 1946 and was an important site for Catholics in the Muslim-majority northern province.

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data, or ACLED, an independent watchdog group that monitors global conflicts, the Islamic State-Mozambique claimed responsibility for the attack on May 1.

The ACLED said the attack on the church was part of a "repeated pattern" by the extremist group and was done "with a view to attracting international attention."

"Church attacks are rare and account for no more than 6% of violent events in this area of Mozambique — making this event very unusual and probably designed to attract international attention," the organization noted.

In April, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom stated that the Islamic State-Mozambique "has carried out a sustained campaign of violence against both Christian and Muslim communities" since 2017.

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Over the last two years, the commission said, it has focused its attacks on Christian-majority areas in the Cabo Delgado province, including burning 18 churches in villages in the Chiúre district in 2024, and beheading six Christians in Ancuabe, the same district where the recently destroyed church was located.

In the Diocese of Pemba, repeated attacks on parishes and churches in Cabo Delgado have contributed to a broader pattern of organized destruction of Catholic religious infrastructure, forcing whole Catholic parishes to flee," the commission stated.

Juliasse told ACN that although the missionaries in the parish are safe, "the community remains in shock even after the attackers left the scene at nightfall," and urged solidarity from Catholics around the world.

"We ask for attention and solidarity for the victims of Meza," the bishop said. "For nine years, we have watched the insurgents burn chapels and churches in the Diocese of Pemba. But the faith of God's people will never burn. Every day, it is rebuilt."