Rwanda Mandates Installation of Lightning Rods in Churches After Lightning Kills Adventists

https://atoday.org/rwanda-mandates-installation-of-lightning-rod-in-churches-after-lightning-kills-adventists/

10 April 2018 | The Rwandan government is requiring all churches in the country to install lightning rods after a lightning strike on an Adventist church last month killed 16 people and injured 140.

[The *Washington Post* confirmed](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/03/12/lightning-strikes-worshipers-in-rwandan-church-killing-15-and-injuring-dozens/) that the Adventist church that was struck did not have a lightning rod. The church did not have the equipment because, according to Jacqueline Benhirwe, the area’s disaster management officer, it could not afford one.

The lightning strike took place in Nyaruguru, a mountainous region of southern Rwanda near the border with Burundi. It took place at about noon during a church service on Saturday, March 10.

[On April 4, the *Washington Post* reported](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/rwanda-closes-thousands-of-churches-in-bid-for-more-control/2018/04/04/1a758880-37f0-11e8-af3c-2123715f78df_story.html) that the Rwandan government had recently shut thousands of churches and dozens of mosques in a bid to control religious communities, “whose sometimes makeshift operations, authorities say, have threatened the lives of followers.” The closings are controversial due to concerns whether the president’s motivation is to restrict freedom of expression.

Anastase Shyaka, head of the Rwanda Governance Board told the AP that the shuttered houses of worship, “were found in such poor physical conditions… we are not targeting any religion… We are closing prayer houses of all different denominations and asking them to meet existing health and safety standards for their followers.”

The Rwanda Union Mission of the Adventist Church has over 1800 churches and has in excess of 830,000 members.