

Nigerian Police Say Armed Men Kidnap Archbishop in Delta

Armed men in Nigeria's southern Delta region have abducted Archbishop Ignatius Kattey, the country's second most senior Anglican cleric, police said on Monday, in a rare case targeting a religious leader.

Kattey was captured along with his wife at around 10:30 p.m. on Friday near his home in Rivers state, although his wife later escaped during a police chase, according to police spokeswoman Angela Agabe.

She gave no further details on the attackers, adding only that police were still hunting them.

"We believe the Archbishop will be released soon going by the information available," Agabe added.

Kidnapping is rife in Nigeria, especially in the southern oil-producing Delta, making millions of dollars a year for criminal gangs and pushing up insurance and security costs for businesses, including international oil companies.

But Nigerian politicians and wealthy businessmen are usually the target, rather than religious figures.

The Archbishop's abduction is arguably the most high-profile since the mother of Nigeria's Finance Minister and former World Bank Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was abducted in December last year. She was later released.

The Church of Nigeria, which says it has 18 million baptized members, said in a statement on Monday that it had not been contacted by the kidnappers.

"We will not pay any ransom. Ransom payment is not in our dictionary," the church said in a statement.

Nigeria's population of nearly 170 million is split roughly equally between Christians, who dominate the south, and Muslims, who are the majority in the north.

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