

Over 60 Baptist Church Members in Nigeria Kidnapped; Government to Blame

Armed gunmen stormed into a Baptist church in Nigeria on October 31, killing one Christian and kidnapping more than 60 church members.

Members of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Kakau Daji area in southern Kaduna were enjoying Sunday church services when bandits armed with guns came in and kidnapped several members, killing one member in the process. Some reports, including from the *Catholic Herald*, said the number kidnapped could be more than 100.

A ransom has been asked, though it was increased due to the bandits having to travel far for network service to contact the family members of those kidnapped.

The area has experienced a heavy presence of bandits recently and even had telecom networks to alert people to bandit activity that was unfortunately down at the time of the church service. This comes on the heels of July's abduction of over 140 students from Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna State's Chikun local government area. No reports have confirmed the safe return of the students.

Efforts had been made to combat this surge of bandit conflict, but many say the government isn't doing enough to protect Nigerian Christians and even Christian workers, who have since gone into hiding with the latest kidnapping. Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Rev. Joseph Haya, states that "We are seriously worried now. Gunmen are gradually approaching the township." He also said, to *The Epoch Times*, the church is the worst hit in the area.

Many point fingers at the government and wonder if it is aware how persecuted Christians are in the area and whether terrorists are held accountable for their actions. Open Doors USA, a watchdog group for persecuted Christians, lists Nigeria as No.. 9 on its 2021 World Watch list of countries where Christians are most persecuted. Even the U.S. State Department has noticed the country's growing hostility toward Christians and consider them a "country of particular concern" over violations of religious freedoms. {eo}

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