

18 Christians Killed in Overnight Attack

Fulani attackers killed 18 Christians in a late-night assault on Friday (July 19) in central Nigeria, area residents said.

The assailants invaded Mbacher village, a predominantly Christian community in Benue state's Katsina-Ala County, at about 11 p.m., said Joseph Achiv.

"A group of Fulani Muslims carrying deadly weapons attacked Mbacher village," Achiv told Christian Daily International-Morning Star News. "Eighteen Christians were killed during the attack as the villagers were sleeping."

Justine Shaku, chairman of the Katsina-Ala Local Government Council, said members that night received distressed calls and text messages from villagers that a group of Fulani terrorists were invading their village.

"We made efforts to ensure soldiers were drafted to the area to repel the bandits, but the soldiers got there when the terrorists had left after killing 18 persons," Shaku said.

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Catherine Anene, spokesperson for the Benue State Police Command, said security agents had been deployed to the area.

"We have received reports from Katsina Ala Division of the police about the attacks in that area and the killing of 18 persons," Anene said. "A joint security effort is on as security agents have been deployed there, and investigation into the occurrence of the incident has commenced."

Nigeria remained the deadliest place in the world to follow Christ, with 4,118 people killed for their faith from Oct. 1,

2022 to Sept. 30, 2023, according to Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List (WWL) report. More kidnappings of Christians than in any other country also took place in Nigeria, with 3,300.

Nigeria was also the third highest country in number of attacks on churches and other Christian buildings such as hospitals, schools and cemeteries, with 750, according to the report.

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In the 2024 WWL of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian, Nigeria was ranked No. 6, as it was in the previous year.

Numbering in the millions across Nigeria and the Sahel, predominantly Muslim Fulani comprise hundreds of clans of many different lineages who do not hold extremist views, but some Fulani do adhere to radical Islamist ideology, the United Kingdom's All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom or Belief (APPG) noted in a 2020 report.

"They adopt a comparable strategy to Boko Haram and ISWAP and demonstrate a clear intent to target Christians and potent symbols of Christian identity," the APPG report states.

Christian leaders in Nigeria have said they believe herdsmen attacks on Christian communities in Nigeria's Middle Belt are inspired by their desire to forcefully take over Christians' lands and impose Islam as desertification has made it difficult for them to sustain their herds.

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