

Relentless Violence Targets Christian Communities

Fulani herdsmen killed two Christians in central Nigeria's Benue state on Wednesday, Oct. 9, and two others in another part of the state on Oct. 3, local sources said.

In northeastern Benue state's Logo County, herdsmen on Wednesday attacked the village of Ayilamo, killing university student Solomon Kwanta and another Christian, area residents said.

"Apart from the two Christians killed during the attack, many other Christians were injured," said Benard Chia in a message to Christian Daily International-Morning Star News. "Armed Fulani herdsmen attacked Ayilamo community in Logo Local Government Area of Benue state at about midnight on Wednesday."

Kwanta was a final-year student at the University of Calabar who was back in the village on break, Chia said.

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Resident Aandosoo David said villagers injured in the attack were being treated at the Primary Health Care Centre in Ayilamo, adding, "Your prayers are needed, please."

Tyongi Emmanuel, another village resident, said the situation was dire.

"Everyone here is on the run, as we have all been displaced," he said, while villager Tsavsar Msughaondo told Christian Daily International-Morning Star News, "Fulani herdsmen have taken over our ancestral lands; we are therefore calling on the Nigerian government to quickly intervene here in the

Ayilamo area of Benue state in order to end these unprovoked attacks on us.”

In Kwande County in the southeastern part of the state, herdsmen on Oct. 3, killed two Christians in Tse Wende, villagers said.

Fabian Terseer identified the slain Christians as Terwse Azege and Orseer Kende.

“Attacks by armed Fulani herders have become a common occurrence here,” Terseer said. “Unfortunately, media organizations have not given these incidents adequate coverage. The sad thing too is that the Nigerian government has not deemed it necessary to take steps towards ending these attacks on our communities. For how long are we expected to endure these killing epidemics?”

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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 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.

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 report. More kidnappings of Christians than in any other country also took place in Nigeria, with 3,300.

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. Nigeria was 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 WWL report.

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