

Violent Assault on Church Services Results in Several Killed

ABUJA, Nigeria—(Christian Daily International—Morning Star News) – Fulani herdsmen in central Nigeria killed two Christians on Thursday and three others at church services the prior Sunday, when they also kidnapped a pastor and 30 congregation members, sources said.

A band of armed herdsmen on Thursday (Sept. 19) attacked Kurmin-Kare village, a predominantly Christian community in Kachia County in southern Kaduna state, killing two Christians identified as Audu Bala and Jonathan Moses, said area resident Solomon Sanga.

“Audu Bala and Jonathan Moses were working on their farms when these Fulani herdsmen waylaid them and shot at them,” Sanga told Christian Daily International-Morning Star News. “The two died instantly, while another Christian victim, Japheth Zarma Yakubu, was kidnapped on Sept. 10, also while he was working in his farm.”

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The assailants have phoned Yakubu’s family with a ransom demand of 30 million naira (\$18,295 USD), he said.

On Sept. 15 in Kajuru County, also in southern Kaduna state, Fulani herdsmen attacked an Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) congregation and a Catholic church as they worshipped in Bakinpah-Maró village, killing three Christians and abducting the ECWA pastor and 30 other Christians, area residents said.

"The terrorists, whom we believe are armed Fulani herdsmen, attacked the churches during Sunday morning worship services, killing three Christians and kidnapping 30 more Christians, including the Rev. Bernard Gajere, the pastor of the ECWA church in the village," Cafra Caino said.

On Sept. 8, in predominantly Christian Kallah Afogo village, Kajuru County, suspected Fulani herdsmen at about 11:30 p.m. attacked the Primary Health Care Clinic, killing at least five Christians and kidnapping dozens of others, residents said in text messages.

Benjamin Maigari, an area community leader, identified those killed as Garkuwa Alfarma, Buhari Maidiga, Uba Auta, Yakubu Gaku and Atabata Naallah.

Hassan Mansur, spokesman for the Kaduna State Police Command, confirmed the attacks in the areas and said officers and other security agency personnel were attempting to rescue those abducted.

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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.

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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