

Fresh killings, abductions heighten security fears amid drone attacks

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The National Security Adviser to President Bola Tinubu, Nuhu Ribadu

- **Four killed in Kogi clash; gunmen abduct passengers**
- **Gunmen kidnap nine worshippers during church vigil in Benue**
- **Islamic State affiliates carry out about 20 drone strikes across West Africa**
- **Tinubu pledges stronger security push as insecurity threatens growth**
- **U.S. lawmaker condemns attacks on Christians, urges protection of citizens**

FRESH killings, kidnappings and violent clashes across parts of Nigeria have heightened nationwide security fears, as new intelligence reports warn of expanding terrorist drone attacks.

This came as **President Bola Tinubu** pledged to strengthen Nigeria's security architecture, stressing that defeating terrorism remains central to economic stability and national development.

Residents of Ejule community in Ofu Local Council of Kogi State yesterday raised alarm over the alleged abduction of passengers travelling in a commercial Sienna bus along the Ejule–Aloma road, even as four persons were confirmed killed in a violent clash in nearby Ibaji Local Council.

Sources said the abduction occurred yesterday afternoon when gunmen suspected to be kidnappers intercepted the commercial vehicle heading towards Abuja. Security agencies had yet to issue an official statement as of press time, but the abandoned vehicle was said to have carried at least 10 passengers.

Concerned residents called on the Kogi State Government to deploy recently procured surveillance drones to track the kidnappers and facilitate the rescue of the victims.

Also, at least four persons were confirmed dead following a violent clash between armed Fulani men and residents of Ibaji communities, including Ejule Ojebe. The Deputy Speaker of the Kogi State House of Assembly, Mrs Comfort Ojoma Nwuchiola Egwaba, disclosed the casualty figure in a statement issued in Lokoja.

“I am deeply saddened by reports of violent clashes between Ibaji communities — particularly Ejule Ojebe — and Fulani herdsmen in parts of Ibaji Local Council, including the tragic loss of lives in Ejule Ojebe,” she said, condemning the violence and describing the incident as painful for the affected families and the wider community.

Egwaba called on security agencies to act swiftly to restore peace, protect lives and property, and bring perpetrators to justice, stressing the need for proactive and lasting solutions to address the root causes of the tensions.

“I urge community leaders, youths and residents to remain calm, cooperate with law enforcement, and avoid spreading unverified information capable of escalating the situation. As your representative, I remain committed to working with the state government, security agencies and traditional institutions to ensure the safety of our communities and the preservation of peace in Ibaji,” she added.

Similarly, gunmen abducted nine worshippers of Saint John's Catholic Church, Ojije, Utonkon District of Ado Local Council, Benue State.

The victims were reportedly whisked away on Sunday during a vigil held within the church premises. A former councillor representing Ukwuonyo Ward in the Ado Local Council legislative council, Mr Emmanuel Udah, confirmed the incident yesterday, describing the abduction as a targeted attack carried out while worshippers were praying.

Udah said residents of the area had been traumatised by the development, noting that many no longer feel safe. He called on authorities to strengthen security measures and curb the recurring attacks in parts of Benue State, lamenting what he described as a growing sense of abandonment among rural communities.

“The people of Utonkon are living in fear, families are broken, children are traumatised, farmers, traders and worshippers are all trapped, as no one feels safe anymore in our land,” he said, adding that the incident reflects a broader pattern of insecurity affecting several communities in the state.

Confirming the abduction, the spokesperson of the [Benue State Police Command](#), Mrs Udeme Edet, said nine worshippers were kidnapped during the attack. She added that the state Commissioner of Police, Mr Ifeanyi Emenari, had deployed tactical units in collaboration with local vigilantes to track down the abductors and rescue the victims, assuring that security operatives were on the trail of the perpetrators.

Security alert over terrorist drone attacks

THIS came as terrorist groups operating in West Africa are increasingly deploying drones in attacks, raising concerns among security experts that extremist groups may be developing the capacity to wage what analysts describe as a “war from the skies.”

A report by the BBC, citing data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (Acled), revealed that two Islamic State (IS) affiliates have carried out about 20 drone strikes in the region, most of them in Nigeria.

The development reinforces earlier warnings by a member of the House of Representatives, Mr Ahmed Jaha, who last year said Boko Haram insurgents had begun using drones to attack communities in Borno State, adding that some of the weapons deployed by the terrorists appeared more sophisticated than those available to the Nigerian military.

Ladd Serwat, a senior Africa analyst at Aclad, told the BBC that jihadist groups typically rely on commercially available quadcopter drones that are “rigged with explosives,” while also deploying the devices for reconnaissance and surveillance ahead of ground assaults.

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According to Aclad data, the [Islamic State West Africa Province \(ISWAP\)](#) has carried out at least 10 drone strikes since 2024 across north-eastern Nigeria and neighbouring areas of northern Cameroon, southern Niger and southern Chad, all regions affected by the Lake Chad insurgency. A similar number of attacks were attributed to another affiliate, the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP).

Although Nigeria maintains strict regulations on the importation and use of commercial drones, Malik Samuel, a senior researcher with the Good Governance Africa think tank, said extremist groups have been able to obtain the devices through smuggling networks operating across the region’s porous borders. He noted that militants favour drones because they can “strike targets more effectively” while reducing their own casualties.

The most recent reported incident occurred on January 29 in Borno State, when insurgents launched a coordinated assault involving multiple armed drones and ground fighters on a military base. The military said nine soldiers were killed in the attack, which analysts attribute to ISWAP, described by Aclad as the most prolific Islamic State affiliate in Africa engaged in drone warfare.

Security expert Audu Bulama Bukarti warned that the growing use of armed and surveillance drones by extremist groups in the Sahel and Lake Chad region represents a significant shift in the nature of the conflict, noting that drones

reduce operational costs, enhance intelligence gathering and enable attacks on previously hard-to-reach military targets.

Tinubu vows to strengthen security, drive inclusive growth at NEC conference

MEANWHILE, President Bola Tinubu yesterday declared that terrorism and banditry are alien to Nigeria's collective identity, reaffirming his administration's commitment to inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic stability and strengthened national security at the opening of the second edition of the [National Economic Council \(NEC\) Conference in Abuja](#).

Tinubu assured participants of his government's determination to reinforce the country's security architecture and restore peace in troubled communities, linking insecurity directly to economic stagnation. "I promise you here that I'll play my part... I am here again to further find ways to strengthen our security forces and defeat terrorism," he said.

He disclosed that seven mechanisation zones would soon be established nationwide to boost agricultural productivity, stressing that the fight against violent crimes remains a top priority of his administration. "We will overcome this unacceptable terrorism and banditry. It's not part of our culture. It's foreign to us," the President declared.

Describing insecurity as a major economic hindrance, Tinubu urged all tiers of government to work collectively towards an urgent and lasting solution, while commending the governors of Borno, Katsina and Kaduna states, among others, for doing "so much to defend our freedom, liberty and our commonwealth."

Addressing governors, ministers, lawmakers and economic stakeholders at the State House Banquet Hall, Abuja, the President described the NEC as a strategic platform for cooperative federalism, policy coordination and collective national action. He noted that the conference theme — inclusive growth and sustainable national development under the Renewed Hope National Development Plan 2026–2030 — reflects Nigeria's long-term aspirations.

Highlighting recent fiscal and monetary reforms, Tinubu pointed to early signs of exchange-rate stability and easing inflationary pressures, commending the Central Bank of Nigeria for sustaining macroeconomic balance. He added that more predictable federal allocations to states and local governments were improving their ability to meet salary obligations, expand infrastructure and deliver social services.

Vice President Kashim Shettima, who chairs the NEC, called for deeper collaboration among the three tiers of government, saying: “The relevance of this council lies not in the size of its membership but in the quality of ideas it generates,” while urging members to prioritise poverty reduction, job creation and fiscal sustainability.

Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, and representatives of the Nigeria Governors’ Forum also stressed the need for sustained intergovernmental cooperation, noting that coordinated implementation of reforms at federal and state levels remains critical to achieving long-term economic growth.

U.S. lawmaker condemns attacks on Christians in Nigeria

IN a related development, a member of the United States Congress, Mr Riley Moore, has called for urgent action to end what he described as violent attacks against Christians in Nigeria, urging authorities to strengthen efforts to protect citizens.

In a statement posted on his verified X handle yesterday, Moore reacted to last week’s abduction of a Catholic priest, Rev Fr Nathaniel Asuwaye of Holy Trinity Parish in Kaduna, who was reportedly kidnapped alongside 10 others during an attack that also left three parishioners dead.

“Please join me in praying for the safe return of Rev Fr Nathaniel Asuwaye of Holy Trinity Parish in Kaduna, who was kidnapped alongside 10 others,” Moore said.

“The genocide of Christians must end, and it falls squarely on the Nigerian government’s shoulders to defend its citizens — all of its citizens — and end this violent persecution. Please keep praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ,” he added.