

Easter: 27 Killed In Kaduna, Benue, Katsina Attacks



By **Aza Msue** 1 Day Ago in Cover Stories, News



Army rescued 31 church worshippers abducted by terrorists on Sunday during an Easter church service in Ariko Village, Kachia local government area of Kaduna State. PHOTOS: NIGERIAN ARMY

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BY AZA MSUE and NONYE EKWENUGO, GODWIN ENNA, Tarkaa David

About 25 people were on Sunday killed in Benue and Kaduna communities following attacks by bandits.

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It was gathered that scores were kidnapped during the Kaduna attack, and that several houses were burnt in Benue.

In the attack in Benue, no fewer than 17 persons were reportedly killed by suspected armed herdsmen following a fresh attack on the Mbalom community in the Gwer East Local Government Area of the state on Easter Sunday.

This is not the first time the community has suffered such a bloody attack.

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LEADERSHIP recalls that on April 24, 2018, two Catholic priests, Rev. Fr. Joseph Gor and Rev. Fr Felix Tyolaha, alongside 17 worshippers, were killed by suspected armed herdsmen at St. Ignatius Parish in Ukpok Mbalom.

They were given a mass burial by the Benue State Government, led by former Governor Samuel Ortom.

The latest attack has forced residents of the community to desert the area for fear of further attacks.

According to eyewitness accounts, the attackers invaded the community between late Saturday night and Sunday morning shooting at residents and setting several houses on fire. Seventeen bodies were recovered on Sunday morning, while many are still missing.

One of the natives of the area, who is resident in Makurdi, Terseer Akaaver, told our correspondent on the telephone: “I spoke with one of the survivors in the bush, and he told me many people were killed and that some brave youths are moving and recovering corpses. Many residents are missing as people were running in different directions.”

Confirming the attack, Benue State Governor Hyacinth Alia condemned the attack and called on the security agencies to track down the culprits.

The Benue State government did not give casualty figures.

The chief press secretary to the governor, Sir Tersoo Kula, in a statement on Sunday, said Alia described the barbaric act as unacceptable and a direct affront to the state's collective peace and security.

According to him, the governor expressed deep sympathy to families affected by the attack and assured them that the government stands firmly with them in this difficult time.

Governor Alia, he said, noted with grave concern at the pattern of calculated and selective attacks in parts of the state, stressing that such acts of terror, though increasingly hydra-headed in nature, will not be allowed to thrive.

The statement reiterated the state governor's unwavering resolve to confront and subdue all forms of criminality threatening the safety of Benue communities.

The governor commended security agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police Force, for their swift response and ongoing efforts, noting their assurance that they are on the heels of the perpetrators and will ensure their arrest and prosecution."

He urged security operatives to intensify operations to forestall further occurrences and bring lasting relief to affected communities.

While acknowledging the challenges posed by these attacks, Governor Alia assured the people of Benue State that his administration will not relent or leave anything to chance in its duty to safeguard lives and property.

He emphasised that every necessary measure is being taken to strengthen security architecture, enhance intelligence gathering, and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to restore enduring peace.

While calling on residents to remain calm, vigilant, and law-abiding, Governor Alia charged them to continue supporting security agencies with credible information that can aid ongoing operations.

However, Benue State Police Command's spokesperson, DSP Udeme Edet, did not respond or return calls when contacted over the attack.