

Bandits burn Catholic priest, shoot another in Niger

From Abubakar Akote
(Minna) & Raphael
Ogbonnaiye (Ado-Ekiti)

- Curfew as chieftaincy tussle claims village head
- Priest kidnapped in Ekiti

Bandits around 3am on Sunday killed the priest of the Catholic Church, Kafin-Koro, Paikoro LGA of Niger State, Rev. Fr Isaac Achi, in his residence.

Fr. Achi was the Catholic priest of St. Theresa Catholic Church, Madala, Niger State when it was bombed on Christmas day in 2011, in which about 44 people were killed and 75 others wounded. The attack was masterminded by Kabiru Umar, a.k.a Kabiru Sokoto.

Daily Trust gathered that the religious leader's residence was also burnt in the Sunday attack.

The Police Public Relations Officer in Niger State, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, confirmed the incident to our correspondent.

He said the attackers set the house ablaze when they found it difficult to gain access and burnt the religious leader to death.

"A colleague of the Rev. Father, identified as Father Collins, was equally shot on the shoulder while trying to escape from the scene," he added.

The PPRO said, the attackers escaped before the arrival of the police while the corpse of Father Isaac was recovered and Father Collins taken to hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Niger State chapter, has condemned the killing of the priest.

In a statement, the CAN chairman, Most Rev. Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, condoled with the Catholic Diocese of Minna, parishioners, the entire Christendom, and the immediate family of the slain priest.

He called on the government, police and other security agencies to intensify

efforts in tackling banditry and insurgency in the state.

The state governor, Abubakar Sani Bello, in a statement by his chief press secretary, Mary Noel-Berje, described the killing as ungodly and inhumane.

He said attacking a religious facility to murder anyone was the worst dimension of terrorist attacks.

"This is a sad moment, for a priest to be killed in such a manner means that we are not at all saved. These terrorists have lost it, and drastic action is needed to end this ongoing carnage," he said.

The governor commiserated with the Christian community, especially the Catholic Church, over the incident, promising that the government would not rest on its oars to ensure that the perpetrators were brought to book.

He also prayed for the quick recovery of the injured reverend father who was also shot at by the bandits.

He called on security agencies to evolve new strategies that will end the atrocious and barbaric acts.

Catholic priest kidnapped in Ekiti

In a similar incident, gunmen on Saturday evening abducted the Parish priest of St. George's Catholic Church, Omu Ekiti, Rev Fr. Michael Olofinlade.

He was abducted between Itaji and Ijelu Ekiti while returning from Ado Ekiti, the state capital, to his base.

Reacting to the kidnap, the Owajumu of Omu Ekiti, Oba Adeyeye Ogundeyi, said security agencies and hunters had since been mobilised to go after the abductors to rescue the priest.

Efforts to get the reaction of the Ekiti State Police Command were not successful as of the time of

filing this report. **Hoodlums kill village head in Niger over leadership tussle**

In another attack, hoodlums Saturday afternoon killed the village head of Lambata in Gurara LGA of Niger State, Alhaji Mohammed Abdulsafur Lambata.

Daily Trust gathered that the village head was first attacked in the morning at the local government secretariat in Lambata where he was attending a meeting.

His Son, Zakari Musa, told *Daily Trust* on phone that, "The attackers followed him to his house and killed him. He was first attacked in the morning while attending a meeting at the local government secretariat but he escaped. They trailed him to his house later in the day around 1pm and killed him with cutlasses, sticks and other dangerous weapons.

"The whole thing is about the chieftaincy title that was conferred on him by the Emir of Suleja about three years ago. The other side that claimed to be the owner of the title insisted that he should be removed. Last year, his house was burnt down," he said.

Musa said his father's younger brother lost one of his eyes during the attack while his brother had his hand broken, adding that several other people sustained various degrees of injuries and were taken to IBB Specialist Hospital, Minna.

He accused the leadership of the local council of being behind the killing of his father, saying, "last week, his salary was stopped on the orders of the local government chairman.

Daily Trust gathered that the crisis has lingered on for the past three years when the former Emir of Suleja, Mallam Awwal Ibrahim, turbaned the deceased as

the village head which led to unending agitations by a faction that claimed to be the real traditional title holders.

The Niger State Police Command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, and Chairman of Gurara LGC, Yusuf Wali, confirmed the incident to our correspondent.

Abiodun said, "The irate youths attacked the village head and inflicted serious injuries on him and his younger brother, Ibrahim Mohammed, for inexplicable reasons."

He said those who sustained injuries were taken to the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Gawu-Babangida, adding that the village head was confirmed dead on arrival at the hospital while the younger brother was receiving treatment.

He said effort was ongoing to identify and arrest the culprits.

However, the chairman, Gurara LGC, Yusuf Wali, said soldiers and other security operatives had been drafted to the town to curtail further breakdown of law and order.

He, however, denied any involvement in the crisis, saying he wasn't aware of the stoppage of the salary of the deceased as a traditional ruler nor had a hand in the crisis.

Bello imposes curfew

Meanwhile, the state government has imposed a curfew in Lambata to curtail further breakdown of law and order.

Governor Bello in a statement by the Secretary to the State Government, Ahmed Ibrahim Matane, said the 6pm to 6am curfew took effect from Sunday till further notice.

While condemning the killing of the village head, the governor called on the residents to cooperate with security agencies.