

# Murder Of Catholic Priest Ignites Protest In Enugu

By Lawrence Njoku, Enugu,  
Charles Coffie-Gyamfi, Abeokuta  
and Eniola Daniel, Lagos

**T**HE murder of a Catholic Priest in Enugu State, Rev. Fr. Paul Offu, yesterday, sparked off protest in the state, as his colleagues marched round the city to press for improved security.

Offu was the second Catholic Priest murdered in the state this year by yet-to-be-identified gunmen. Another, who escaped death by whiskers, is currently receiving treatment at the hospital.

In a related development, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG Worldwide), Pastor Enoch Adeboye, has urged prayers for five ministers of the church abducted on their way to attend the church's yearly Ministers' Conference, which started on Thursday, August 1 at the Redemption Camp on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

- State Govt. Moves To Contain Insecurity • Adeboye Express Sadness, Urges Prayers As Gunmen Abduct Five RCCG Ministers On Way To Convention
- IGP Orders Manhunt Of Offu's Killers, Rescue Of RCCG Ministers

Adeboye, who announced the abduction yesterday while giving a talk at the Camp, said the incident

took place on Thursday around the Ijebu-Ode axis, charging the congregation to pray for the release of the

abductees.

While raising concern over the spate of kidnapping in the country, Adeboye said

that was the first time an incident of that magnitude was happening, querying: "As a father, how do you

think I should feel to hear that five of my children have been kidnapped while on their way to attend the Ministers Conference?"

A senior pastor of the church, Pastor Johnson Adesola, said the church

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4





## Kidnapping: Adeboye Urges Prayers As IGP Orders Manhunt Of Perpetrators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

was working towards their release.

Asked if the kidnappers had contacted the church, he said: "We are not yet talking to them, but the church is doing something to ensure their safe return."

Ogun State Police Command's spokesman, Abimbola Oyeeyemi, clarified: "Information at our disposal indicates that some people were travelling in a commercial bus from the Southeast and at a particular spot, some armed criminals came from the bush, forced the driver to stop and later abducted five of the passengers."

He said the Commissioner of Police, Bashir Makama, had led a strong Police operation team to the crime scene to rescue the victims, adding: "Through surveillance we have got to know their location, but we don't want to attack them (kidnappers), so that we won't put the victims' lives in danger. Their lives are more important to us."

"By the grace of God, we will rescue the victims."

Oyeeyemi later gave the names of the abductees as Chidloze · Eluwa (male); Chiemela Iroha (male);

Okoro Ohowukwe (male); Ndubuisi Onwuabueze (male) and Ibeleji Chidinma (female).

Meanwhile, to contain the rising insecurity in Enugu State, an emergency security meeting summoned by Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, yesterday, and attended by heads of security agencies, religious leaders and other stakeholders in the state, while condemning the killing of the priest, resolved to have air surveillance in all forests in the state with immediate effect, as well as rigorous joint security operations from Monday next week.

Offu, the Parish Priest of St. James Greater Parish in Ugbawka, was shot dead by suspected bandits on Thursday evening along the Agbudu road in Awgu Local Council of the state.

It was learnt that the deceased was driving along the road when the gunmen emerged from the bush and shot sporadically into his vehicle. He was reported to have died moments after.

Another account had it that he actually escaped from his assailants into the village square, where they trailed and killed him.

The killing sparked off protests yesterday, as

Catholic priests marched round the state to condemn the act.

Dressed in their white regalia and bearing placards with various inscriptions, they deplored the security situation in the state.

The protesters, who had first marched to the Government House, had initially refused to entertain pleasantries from the governor, telling him, "Enugu is no longer safe and you must do something urgently to secure lives and property."

Some of the placards read: "There is no security in Enugu State," "Enugu is now in the hands of the devil," "We say no to the continued killing of priests and abduction by herdsmen," "Our leaders must rise and check this ugly trend," among others.

Briefing journalists on the outcome of the emergency security meeting, Commissioner of Police, Suleiman Balarabe, assured that no effort would be spared to ensure the arrest of the killers of the priest, adding that the meeting resolved to improve the security architecture around the areas prone to crime in the state, as well as mop-up small arms and weapons in the state.

He said the state govern-

ment had given those in possession of such arms three days to submit them to the Police, stressing that a security committee had been set up to ensure the recovery of such arms.

Balarabe said the state government has also resolved to employ the services of forest guards to improve security, as well as strengthen the vigilante groups.

Also speaking, Archbishop of Enugu Anglican Province, His Grace, Emmanuel Chukwuma, who condemned the murder of the priest, appealed to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to increase Police presence in the state, especially in the rural areas.

He said: "Our rural areas are very porous and insecure and nobody should take that advantage to come to Enugu State and foment trouble. The governor and security agencies are out to ensure that anybody who goes again after priests and human beings in the state will find themselves to blame."

Chukwuma, who commended Ugwuanyi for his efforts at curbing insecurity, assured residents that the state was safe and urged them to continue to go about their lawful duties.

While lamenting the killing, the Catholic Church in the state recalled that two priests had been killed in the state since January this year, while another one was recuperating from the hospital following attacks by hoodlums.

Spokesperson for the church, Rev. Fr. Nnamdi Nwankwo added after the meeting: "It is a sad thing happening, probably an effort to sabotage efforts going on or the popular saying that Enugu is safe."

"Whatever the case is, we are sad and so we have come here to dialogue with the governor and state security to find out how best to handle the insecurity, and I am impressed by the outcome of the meeting and all the resolutions taken."

He commended the state government for the quick response over the issue.

Meanwhile, IGP Mohammed Adamu has ordered massive manhunt for Offu's killers.

He has also directed intensified rescue operation for the abducted RCCG ministers.

In a statement yesterday by Force Public Relations Officer, Frank Mba, crack detectives from the IGP-Intelligence Response Unit

(IRT), the Forensic and Homicide sections of the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) have been deployed to Enugu State to complement the Command in their investigations into the unfortunate incident.

"In addition, the AIG in charge of Zone 9 Headquarters has been directed to mobilise more units of Police Mobile Force (PMF) personnel to black spots in the state."

Similarly, he said intensified operations had commenced for the rescue of the RCCG ministers abducted along J3 Area of Ogere in Ogun State, while tactical and operational assets of the Force had been deployed, with Makama taking the lead role in the search and rescue operations.

Mba stated that the IGP, while condemning the killing of the Catholic priest and the abduction of the clergymen, called for calm, assuring that the perpetrators would not go unpunished. He also enjoined the public to avail the Police with credible information that would assist in apprehending the criminals.