



Breaking News: Air Force officers assault PUNCH reporter, seize phone after Ikeja Electric raid

News

HURIWA demands probe into attacks on Catholic priests, seminarians

By **Guardian Nigeria**

06 March 2025 | 5:46 am



The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has called on the Police, the Department of State Services (DSS), and other security agencies to launch a forensic investigation into what it suspects may be a well-funded and coordinated effort to target Catholic priests and seminarians across Nigeria.

This follows the killing of Reverend Father Sylvester Okechukwu, a Catholic priest from the Kafanchan Diocese, who was abducted from the parish rectory in Kaura Local Council and murdered in broad daylight on Wednesday, March 5.

HURIWA described the killing as “condemnable, despicable, reprehensible, and unforgivable.”

In a statement issued by its National Coordinator, Comrade Emmanuel Onwubiko, the group expressed alarm at the recent wave of kidnappings and killings of Catholic clerics, which it says poses a serious threat to the constitutionally guaranteed rights to life and freedom of religion.

HURIWA noted that between February 22 and March 5, four priests and a seminarian have been abducted in Nigeria, with Father Okechukwu confirmed killed by his abductors in Southern Kaduna. Onwubiko suggested that religious extremists may be behind the surge in attacks and called on security agencies to act swiftly to curb the trend.

“We in HURIWA agree that this ugly and deadly trend is not only worrisome but also heartbreaking, especially for Catholic priests. The safety of these clerics is seemingly no longer guaranteed,” Onwubiko said.

He called on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to ensure that any individuals or groups sponsoring such attacks are arrested and prosecuted. “If there is a secret plot by some Islamic extremists to eliminate Catholic priests, then those responsible for these coordinated attacks must be rounded up immediately, prosecuted professionally, and detained for life to prevent further atrocities,” he added.

HURIWA also condemned the abduction of Rev. Fr. Matthew David Dutsemi of Yola Diocese and Rev. Fr. Abraham Sauman of Jalingo Diocese from their rectory in Demsa Local Council, Adamawa State, on Saturday, February 22.

In another incident, armed men stormed the rectory of St. Peter Catholic Church, Iviukhua-Agenebode, Etsako East Local Council, Edo State, on Monday, March 3, abducting Rev. Fr. Phillip Ekweli and a seminarian. The whereabouts of the abductees remain unknown.

In this article