

# Bandits burn Catholic priest inside residence in Niger

·Abduct five in Katsina church ·Kidnap another Catholic priest in Ekiti

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**B**ANDITS in the early hours of Sunday stormed the parish residence of one Reverend Father Isaac Achi of St. Peters and Paul Catholic Church, along Daza road, Kafin-Koro in Paikoro Local Government Area of Niger State and set the house ablaze with him inside.

This was confirmed in a statement by the state PPRO, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, who narrated that the bandits attempted to gain entrance into the residence at about 3:00a.m, but faced difficulties and resorted to setting the house ablaze while the said reverend father was still inside.

According to Abiodun, a colleague of the reverend father identified as Father Collins was also shot in the shoulder while trying to escape from the scene.

The police spokesperson further disclosed that tactical teams attached to Kafin-Koro Division were immediately

dispatched to the scene, but the insurgents escaped before their arrival.

"However, the lifeless body of Father Achi was recovered, while Father Collins was rushed to the hospital for treatment.

"The Commissioner of Police, Niger State Command, Ogundele Ayodeji, has dispatched a reinforcement team to the area and effort is ongoing to apprehend the assailants as investigation into the unfortunate attack has commenced."

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

In a statement, the state chairman of CAN, Most Reverend Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, condoled with the Catholic Diocese of Minna, parishioners and the entire Christian community, as well as the immediate family of the slain priest over the incident.

The CAN chairman prayed for the repose of the soul of priest to rest in peace.

Also, Governor Abubakar

Sani Bello condemned the killing.

Governor Bello, in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Mary Noel-Berje, on Sunday described the setting ablaze of the priest's residence as ungodly and inhumane.

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

The governor commiserated with the Christian community, especially the Catholic Church, over the incident, promising that the government would ensure the perpetrators are brought to book.

He also prayed for the quick recovery of the injured Reverend Father Collins.

In a related development, police in Katsina State have said five worshippers were kidnapped when bandits stormed a church in Kankara council area on Sunday morning.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Gambo Isa, in a statement issued to newsmen on Sun-

day, said: "At about 7:00a.m., on Sunday, a distress call was received that terrorists in their numbers, shooting sporadically with AK-47 rifles, invaded Dantsauni village in Kankara Local Government Area of the state.

"The bandits shot one Pastor Haruna in his hand and kidnapped five women who were preparing to go to the church for Sunday service.

"The kidnapped victims are Rabi Isyaku (15), Rabi Saidu (36), Rabi Babba (49), Saratu Hadi (27) and Nussaiba Shuaibu (13), all of Maitsauni village in Kankara LGA.

"The DPO of Kankara led a team of policemen to the village, but before his arrival, the terrorists had already escaped with the victims.

"The injured pastor was evacuated to the General Hospital, Kankara for treatment.

"Efforts are on with a view to arresting the hoodlums."

Earlier, it was reported that hundreds of bandits on motorcycles had stormed the New Life for All Church in Kankara council area and ab-

ducted over 25 worshippers.

It was reported that the terrorists invaded the church at Dan-Tsauni Gidan Haruna community when service was still ongoing.

Senior Special Assistant to Governor Aminu Bello Masari on Christian Affairs, Reverend Ishaya Jurau, who spoke on the incident, said: "The bandits attacked the New Life for All Church in Jan-Tsauni, Gidan Haruna in Kankara Local Government Area today [Sunday] at about 10:00a.m.

"They [bandits] abducted 25 worshippers and left the church pastor with injuries.

"Security agencies are currently on top of the situation. They are working tirelessly to rescue the victims unhurt. We appreciate the efforts of the security."

Also, gunmen suspected to be kidnappers have abducted a priest with the Ekiti State Catholic Diocese, Reverend Father Michael Olofinlade, in Oye Local Government Area of the state.

**Nigerian Tribune** gathered that Olofinlade, who is the

parish priest of St George Catholic Church, Omu-Ekiti, was kidnapped by the gunmen between Itaji-Ekiti and Ijelu-Ekiti road at about 6:00p.m. on Saturday.

As of the time of filing this report, the abductors were yet to contact the victim's family or the leadership of the diocese.

Confirming the incident, the Bishop of the Ekiti Catholic Diocese, Most Reverend Felix Ajakaye, said the priest was on his way from a pastoral assignment in the state capital when he was waylaid and taken to unknown destination.

In a statement by the Director of Social Communications of the diocese, Reverend Father Anthony Ijasan, the Bishop said, "Father Olofinlade went for a pastoral assignment outside the parish. His abduction happened while he was on his way back to the parish at about 6.00p.m."

Efforts to get the reaction of the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) ASP Sunday Abutu, were not successful as he did not pick calls made to his mobile phone.

Security forces were on the