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Terrorists on Rampage, Kill Village Head, Vigilantes in Niger, Anambra; Abduct Priest in Benue

Ahamefula Ogbu in Lagos and
Laleye Dipo in Minna

Insecurity, which has been pervasive across the country, continues to take its toll as the village head of Mulo, Mashegu Local Government Area of Niger State, as well as two vigilantes in Anambra State were late last Thursday killed by terrorists, while a Catholic priest was kidnapped in Benue State.

Sources said the village head, Mallam Usman Garba was abducted along with three other members of his community, and while being led into their hideout, the terrorists suddenly turned against the traditional ruler and killed him before taking away the remaining victims.

It was learnt that the heavily armed terrorists also sacked the community and escaped

with valuable items including agricultural produce.

The State Commissioner for Internal Security and Humanitarian Affairs, Emmanuel Umar when contacted yesterday morning confirmed the incident saying security operatives are after the terrorists.

According to Umar, Mashegu Local Government Area has witnessed a series of attacks in the last two weeks but regretted that the murder of the village head of Malo community "is the height of the attacks."

He said Niger State Governor Abubakar Sani Bello has directed all security agencies to mobilise in full force to flush out the terrorists and completely eradicate insecurity in Mashegu LGA.

According to him, although the security situation across the state had reduced, there were

still some threats and pockets of attacks in some communities including Mashegu, Mariga, and Kontagora local government areas.

"There is improvement in the security situation in the state. There has been a reduction in attacks but we are aware that the threat is still there and still exists. Recently, we have seen attacks in the fringes of Mashegu, Mariga, and Kontagora," he said.

Umar assured the residents across the state of a peaceful Christmas and New Year celebration, adding that the security agencies would increase patrol and visibility to curb any further attack or terror incident.

"We are providing a call number for communities and residents. If there is any movement or sighting of any act of terror or any criminals, the communities should dial

07031964389.

"The Governor is reassuring Nigerites that he is still committed to ensuring that the state is safe and that all is in place to ensure an attack-free and hitch-free festive period."

Umar then urged communities to liaise with the security agencies around them and draw their attention to anything that would cause a threat to the lives of the people.

Killings in Anambra, Abduction in Benue

Two vigilantes simply identified as Elochukwu, alias Ogbaka Ekwu, and Comrade Abiriwa were killed in Umuora village, Uga, Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State, late last Thursday, while Mark Ojotu, a Catholic priest of Oturkpo diocese was kidnapped.

Elochukwu and Abiriwa were allegedly abducted from their duty posts at night and their lifeless bodies were found at different locations some hours later.

According to sources, Agbaka's body was found dumped in an area called Akpulu hours later, while Abiriwa was found dead at an unnamed location in Imo State.

Ojotu, who is the chaplain of St. Mary's Hospital, Okpoga in Okpokwu LGA of Benue State, was kidnapped along Okpoga-Ojapo road. The incident was confirmed by chancellor of the diocesan secretariat, Joseph Itodo.

"We write to notify you of the kidnap of one of our priests, Rev. Fr. Mark Ojotu. He is the Chaplain of St. Mary's Hospital, Okpoga. The sad incident occurred today, 22nd December 2022 at about 5.00pm along Okpoga-Ojapo Road, Okpokwu LGA, Benue

State.

"The Local Ordinary, Most Rev. Michael Ekwoyi Apochi, has called on all Christ's Faithful in the Catholic Diocese of Oturkpo and beyond to earnestly pray for his quick and safe release as we intensify efforts to ensure his release.

"We commend our brother and all those in the kidnappers' den throughout the country to the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary for their speedy and safe release from the hands of their abductors."

Benue State police spokesperson, Catherine Anene while confirming the development said; "The abduction was reported this morning. We have commenced investigations. The last reported priest abduction in Benue was in July when Peter Amodu was seized while working in the Catholic diocese of Oturkpo."

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