

Gunmen kill cleric, 2 other church members in Niger

● *Scores kidnapped*

By Wole Mosadomi

MINNA—A cleric of Evangelical Church Winning All, ECWA and two members of the same church, have been reportedly killed by suspected gunmen in Niger State community.

The incident occurred in Majure village, Munya Local Government Area of the state, Monday evening.

Vanguard gathered that the trio were killed while working on their different farms near the church.

The suspects were said to have invaded the farm from different directions and started shooting at them and within a twinkling of an eye, they fell to the bullets.

Sources from the embattled community told our correspondent that the gunmen were numbering over 50 and that in their usual manner, invaded the village and some communities within on motorcycles and started shooting sporadically to scare the villagers.

"As a result of the pandemonium, the gunmen succeeded in abducting no fewer than 20 villagers mostly women and children and were ferried to an unknown destination. The suspects are yet to open any discussion with family members of those kidnapped," the source who wanted anonymity said.

It was further gathered that the bandits also hijacked a commuter Sharon Space bus from the highway, abducted the driver and 10 passengers inside and used the Sharon bus to ferry their victims to unknown place.

The local vigilante group members, who could have gone after the suspects, it was later gathered, could not because of lack of fuel in their operational vehicle.

Besides the passengers kidnapped, an eyewitness also told our correspondent that a pastor of another church, his wife and a child have been declared missing and it was being speculated that they could have been killed or among those kidnapped.

Efforts to confirm the incident from the local government chairman, Alhaji Aminu Najume was abortive as his cell phone was not connecting while the state Police Public Relations Officer, Wasiu Abiodun could not also be reached through his phone.

However, Secretary of the state Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Special Apostle Raphael Opawoye confirmed the death of the church members, saying: "We are still digging to get more facts on the incident."