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NIGERIA | Shooting Deaths in Militia Attacks

At least 11 people were killed and 12 injured Sept. 2 in a drive-by shooting by Fulani militia in the Du community of Jos South Local Government Area (LGA), Plateau state.

According to eyewitnesses, members of the Fulani militia arrived in a Hilux van at Latiya at about 8:30 p.m. They opened fire on people in their shops and on the road using semi-automatic weapons before speeding off minutes later. While a police spokesperson said 11 people died, members of the local community put the number at 12, with one missing and presumed dead. Twelve people sustained varying degrees of injury, five who reportedly received treatment at Plateau Hospital, while five are being treated at Jos University Teaching Hospital, where two have reportedly died.

The killings were condemned by several observers, including the Middle Belt Forum. In a statement signed by its coordinator of public communication, the Forum said, “The terrorist attacks on the people of Plateau state have entered a new dimension with the drive-by shooting,” which it described as being “one too many in a week filled with renewed attacks on the people of Plateau state.”

The shootings in Du occurred days after a series of attacks in the Barkin Ladi LGA of Plateau state claimed several lives. On the afternoon of Aug. 28, militia men attacked youth at a mining pond in Wereh, killing one and injuring two. Two young men are still missing.

That evening, Rev. Adamu Gyang Wurim, 50, of the Church of Christ in Nations, his wife Jummai, 45, and their children Theophilus, 20, Dung, 12 and Wurim, 8, were burned to death in their home. The incident occurred during attacks on communities in Foron District Aug. 28 by militia men wielding machetes and AK 47s, which claimed at least 10 lives. The church and homes were among 95 buildings that were burned to the ground, 310 cattle were stolen, and 225 farms that were ready for harvest were looted and destroyed. In a subsequent attack in Fan on Aug. 29, one person was killed.

In a worrying development, the military, who arrived after the perpetrators had gone, reportedly shot and killed a woman who had tried to stop them detaining local youth, asking them to go after the militia instead.

In a video circulating on-line showing the aftermath of her murder, a visibly distressed clergyman appeals for assistance from the United States, British parliamentarians and the United Nations, “America, please stand for us. We are dying ... Please, allow us to survive. We have nobody. Only God in heaven can stand for us. Please, I am begging you. United Nations, your silence is getting worse[er]. ...Please, please, I’m begging you stand for the helpless.” According to the Middle Belt Forum, “The people ... have no trust in the government to protect them, nor [to] end these killings. Their cries for international help reveal this.”

On Aug. 20, Fulani militia men attacked Nasara Baptist Church in Igabi LGA, Kaduna state, killing the Rev. Hosea M. Akuchi as he resisted their attempts to abduct him. The gunmen abducted his wife, Talatu Akuchi, who was unaware her husband had been killed, and initially demanded a ransom for her release. Akuchi was released Aug. 25. It is unclear whether or not a ransom had been paid.

On Aug. 18, a young Catholic priest was shot dead as he left a supermarket in Gwagwalada, Abuja. Rev. Fr. Michael Akawu, who was Assistant Parish Priest at Our Lady of Immaculate Conception Parish, Dobi, was Abuja’s first indigenous Catholic priest. Although his killing is being attributed to armed robbery, nothing had been taken from him.

CSW’s Chief Operations Officer Scot Bower said, “CSW extends its deepest condolences to all who have lost loved ones in these latest attacks. We are particularly disturbed by reports that a woman who survived a militia attack in Plateau state was subsequently killed in cold blood by soldiers who should have been safeguarding her community. The government must regain the trust of vulnerable communities, not only by providing timely and adequate protection, but also by ensuring this murder is investigated in a swift and transparent manner, with any identified suspects facing trial or court martial. Once again CSW urges the federal and state governments to prioritize rehabilitation and justice for traumatized survivors, and to refrain from victimizing them further. We also echo local appeals for the international community and relevant UN officials to raise the relentless loss of life in the indigenous communities of central Nigeria with the government, and to urge it to address the violence committed by the Fulani militia in a swift, decisive and unbiased manner.”