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NIGERIA | Bishop's Wife Released

The wife of the Bishop of Bari Diocese in Kano State, who was abducted by gunmen on March 10, was released.

The release of Saratu Zubairu was confirmed by the Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), The Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh, on March 20, during a service at the Cathedral Church of Holy Trinity, in Lokoja, Kogi state.

Zubairu and a diocesan secretary identified as Deborah, whose release was also confirmed, were kidnapped by gunmen who reportedly laid siege to Gidan Mato in Bari, where the Anglican Cathedral and Bishop's Court are situated, and looted the town and premises. The attack allegedly occurred at a time when the Bishop of Bari, The Rt. Rev. Idris Ado Zubairu, had travelled to Plateau state. It remains unclear whether or not a ransom was paid to secure their freedom.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW welcomes the release of Mrs. Saratu Zubairu and her colleague and wish both women a speedy recovery from this shocking ordeal. We remain deeply concerned by the growing trend of abductions for ransom spreading across Nigeria and continue to call on the government to do everything in its power to ensure adequate protection for vulnerable communities."

Abduction for ransom by armed groups is currently rife across Nigeria. No religious or ethnic community is immune; however, 2018 and 2019 saw a marked increase in the number of church leaders, their family members and lay Christians being specifically targeted for abduction for ransom and/or murder.

More often than not survivors, both Christian and Muslim, report that those responsible for their abductions were of Fulani ethnicity, that they spoke in Fulfulde (the Fulani language), and called the attention of abductees using the same clucking sound herders use for cattle. Others are reported to be francophone, or unable to understand Hausa, the lingua franca of northern Nigeria.