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NIGERIA | Gunmen Attack School, Abduct Students

One person was killed and others were abducted following an attack on the Damba-Kasaya Community in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, on Aug. 24.

One person was killed and others, including several secondary school students, were abducted following an attack on the Damba-Kasaya Community in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State, on Aug. 24.

According to local reports, suspected Fulani militia arrived at the community in large numbers on motorcycles at around 7:45 a.m. They invaded the Prince Academy secondary school, where they abducted a teacher identified by Nigerian media as Christiana Madugu and at least four final year students who were preparing for their Junior Secondary School examination. Schools in Kaduna state recently reopened to enable secondary school children to sit their final examinations. The kidnapped children have been named as Happy Odoji, 14, Miracle Danjuma, 13, her sister Favour Danjuma, 9, who was abducted from her home, and Ezra Bako, 15.

The abductors later contacted the family of the Danjuma sisters using the teacher's telephone to confirm they had their children, but made no further demands.

The gunmen also broke into the Aminchi Baptist Church, which they set ablaze after destroying musical instruments and the public address system, before abducting other villagers.

Witnesses informed local media that the military briefly engaged the assailants and then withdrew for reasons that remain unclear. Unaware of this, villagers continued to pursue the attackers, who opened fire on them, killing a man later identified as Benjamin Auta. He leaves behind a wife and baby.

According to figures compiled the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU), Chikun LGA has experienced a series of militia attacks, with several people either kidnapped for ransom or killed, leaving 45 communities displaced and occupied since 2019. The

current campaign of attacks targeting communities in southern Kaduna has been ongoing since January and has continued despite 24-hour lockdowns in four Local Government Authorities (LGAs) and the deployment of increased security to the region. On Aug. 22, the Kaduna state government relaxed curfew hours in Kauru and Zangon-Kataf LGAs to 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

In an August 2020, report entitled, “The Quiet Genocide: Atrocity Crimes and Systematic Destruction of the Peoples of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria,” Mission Africa International stated that “in Southern Kaduna, people in Gbagyi communities in Chikun Local Government Area, Adara communities in Kajuru and Kachia Local Government Areas, Chawai and Irigwe communities in Kauru Local Government Area and several other communities in Jema’a and Sanga Local Government Areas have been displaced from their ancestral lands by Fulani invaders.” The organization added that 500 people had been killed “from January to June 2020”, and that 50,000 people displaced from 109 communities “cannot currently go to farm and harvest their produce. In some of the communities, they have to pay protection taxes to invaders to get to their farms.”

On Aug. 24, SOKAPU’s president, Jonathan Asake, warned of a “humanitarian crisis” unfolding in southern Kaduna and raised concerns regarding the deteriorating situation in makeshift internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, including a shortage of food, potable water, medicine, beddings and other necessities:

“Hunger is staring at these victims in the face and we are calling on the federal and Kaduna state governments to urgently intervene in this crisis.” He also highlighted the longstanding closures of “over 33 schools in rural communities in Kajuru, Chikun and Kaura LGAs “either as a result of incessant invasions or abductions for ransom.”

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “The situation in southern Kaduna is pressing and increasingly desperate. We extend our condolences to the family of Mr Auta, and our prayers are with those who anxiously await the safe return of their loved ones. We urge the Nigerian government to address this violence and insecurity in an earnest and unbiased manner, to provide humanitarian assistance for the burgeoning number of displaced people and to guarantee their safe return to their homes and lands. We also call on the European Union and the governments of the UK and US to encourage the Kaduna state and federal governments to provide for these IDPs, who continue to rely on NGO and church donations for survival, and to allocate resources towards assisting them as a matter of urgency.”