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## NIGERIA Army implicated in attacks on villages in Jos

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received reports that members of the Nigerian Army have once again been implicated in an attack on a village in Plateau State.

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, a village in Farin Lamba was attacked and two men, a woman and a baby were killed. According to the villagers, the attackers wore military uniforms. The villagers retaliated, shooting one of the attackers in the arm, who reportedly turned out to be a soldier from a nearby security post. The villagers pursued the men, who fled in a military vehicle. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the soldiers belong to a team led by Captain Zakari. The army has refused to comment on the allegations.

The latest attack follows the controversial introduction of a shoot-to-kill policy by the Nigerian army. On January 18, Military spokesman Captain Charles Ekeocha told the BBC that soldiers had been given permission to shoot-to-kill to retain order in Jos following outbreaks of violence over the Christmas period and the alleged murder of an election official at a polling station in Tina Junction on January 17. However, continuing discrepancies in reports of this incident, coupled with persistent allegations of military complicity in violence, have forced a reappraisal of the policy.

According to officials at the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Jos North, no staff members were killed in Tina Junction. In reality, an argument broke out between young Christian and Muslim men at a voters' registration booth for Rikkos ward, which had been moved by INEC officials. When a young Muslim man from a different ward tried to register at the booth for Rikkos, he was challenged by young Christian men from the area. In the ensuing argument, the Muslim youth stabbed a young man from Rikkos, the crowd set upon him and he was lynched and burned. The military intervened and shot into the crowd, killing three young men.

In an interview with a Nigerian newspaper, the President of the Civil Liberties Organization, Mr. Titus Mann, and the member of the House of Representatives for Jos East and Jos South, Mr. Bitrus Kaze, have questioned the composition of the hierarchy of officers in the Plateau State Police Command, which does not reflect religious diversity, as required by the federal character principle. All of the higher ranks, including the Commissioner of Police and his deputy, as well as the Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Criminal Investigations Department, are Muslim.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "Renewed indications of some level of military complicity in violence, and allegations that senior members of the Plateau State Police Command do not sufficiently reflect the federal character principle, underline the urgent need for a review of local security arrangements. These arrangements are clearly not working, and the non-Muslim community has no confidence in them. In order to ensure the confidence of both religious communities and restore peace, the Joint Task Force must be cleansed of sectarian elements, and the hierarchy of the police force must be restructured to better reflect the ethnic and religious diversity of Nigeria."