



9.19.2011

## NIGERIA Soldiers sent to southern Kaduna following armed attack on village

Soldiers and riot police have been drafted to Bitaro Village in southern Kaduna State following an armed attack that occurred in the early hours of Sunday. Four people were killed and over ten injured when armed Fulani tribesmen stormed the village in Jaba Local Government Area (LGA), Southern Kaduna, in Nigeria's Middle Belt.

There has been continuing tension in Kaduna State since April, when hundreds were killed and thousands displaced in deadly post-election violence initiated by supporters of the unsuccessful presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) party. The violence, which quickly took on a sectarian dimension, erupted in 18 of Kaduna's 23 LGA's. Tensions were further raised following the electoral victory of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate, the first elected Christian governor in Kaduna's history.

During a recent visit to both northern and southern Kaduna, a team from Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) noted palpable tensions and heightened security, even in Kaduna City, the state capital. On the evening of 3 September, four Hausa-Fulani youths were detained by a team from Operation Yaki, the joint security unit charged with counter terrorism, as they scouted out the mainly Christian neighborhood of Malali, situated in a predominantly Muslim area of Kaduna City.

In the disused classrooms of a police barracks in Dankande, the team encountered 63 displaced families from four villages destroyed during the April violence, who were living in squalid conditions where they lacked adequate food and water and were under threat of eviction. In every area visited, survivors of the April violence consistently described extensive looting occurring prior to the torching of their properties, and the deliberate targeting of church leaders and church-owned buildings. Several reported finding their possessions and clothing in the homes or on the persons of local Fulanis. In Soba LGA in northern Kaduna, where 85 homes were destroyed, 22 churches razed and five girls were raped, victims reported their attackers had been bussed in from elsewhere, adding that several local Muslims hid Christians in their homes and assisted in dousing some of the fires.

The recent attack on Bitaro Village comes as Nigerian news agencies report a tightening of security in Kaduna and Kano following information indicating that Gaddafi loyalists may have arrived in those states.

CSW's Special Ambassador Stuart Windsor said, "It is extremely worrying that the phenomenon of night time raids, which has already claimed lives in villages in Bauchi and most recently in Plateau State, is now occurring in Kaduna. We offer our deepest condolences to the families of those who died in this appalling attack. We welcome the deployment of soldiers in the area, in the hopes that the military will take effective measures to bring a definitive end to the night-time raids on villages, which have claimed the lives of entire families, including women and children, in neighboring states over the last year. We particularly urge the authorities in all three states to tighten security in the border areas, where these states intersect, in order to prevent groups of would-be assailants from moving freely between one state and another."