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NIGERIA Two dead and twelve wounded in armed raid on church in Kaduna

Calm is reported to be returning to Tabak Village in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State, after local youths blocked roads in protest at Thursday night's armed raid on a village prayer meeting that left two people dead.

The attack on St Augustine Catholic Church occurred at around 11:45 in the evening. According to witnesses, gunmen raided the church as a prayer meeting was coming to an end, fired at a congregation consisting mainly of women and children, and escaped into the bush. Two women died at the scene. Twelve other people were wounded mainly in the arms and legs, and are receiving treatment at St. Louis Hospital in nearby Zonkwa.

The attack on Tabak Village comes in the wake of a 3 am raid in late October on a police station and bank in Saminaka Town in Lere LGA, Kaduna by suspected members of the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram, who reportedly escaped in the direction of Bauchi State carrying cash and weaponry.

In a statement issued on behalf of the Kaduna State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the organisation's secretary, the Reverend Yunusa Nmadu, unequivocally condemned the armed attack "on innocent Christian worshippers in the church", and expressed anxiety that the raid had occurred "in spite of the heavy presence of soldiers in the area". The statement concluded with a call to the Government of Kaduna State "to ensure that the perpetrators of this evil act are fished out and brought to book. Meanwhile we call on all Christians to be calm and prayerful in the face of this new dimension of attack on the Church".

In September, soldiers and riot police were drafted to Bitaro Village in Jaba LGA, also in southern Kaduna following an armed attack by Fulani tribesmen in which four people were killed and over ten injured.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "We extend our deepest sympathies to those bereaved and wounded in this terrible incident. This attack on an innocent congregation of mostly women and children is deplorable, and the fact it could occur despite a heavy military presence in the area is a cause for great concern. CSW urges the Government of Kaduna to ensure that the security services take swift and decisive action to apprehend the perpetrators of this appalling act in order to deter any recurrence. It is vital that these raids are brought to a halt quickly in order to restore confidence and security to the local population."