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NIGERIA | At Least 80 Die In Armed Attacks During Easter Week

At least 19 people were killed, an unknown number injured and an estimated 4,000 displaced when armed Fulanis attacked Mafang and Zilang villages in Kaura Local Government Area (LGA) in Southern Kaduna State over the Easter weekend.

According to local reports, on March 30 well-armed men dressed in black surrounded the villages before launching an assault that continued into Easter Sunday.

Many villagers fled to the nearby hills. Some, who returned later to assess the extent of the damage, were also murdered. The majority of victims were women and children. The assailants also razed a significant number of homes. Many of those displaced by the destruction are reported to be staying in the local Amisi Primary School, as well as in nearby Fadan Attakar and Mifi villages.

The Reverend Yunusa Nmadu, CEO of Christian Solidarity Worldwide-Nigeria (CSW-N), said, "We request prayers for, and extend our condolences to the families of all those who lost their lives during the tragic events of last week. We also call on the relevant state governments to provide urgent assistance to the injured and displaced. The systematic manner in which these attacks now occur indicates a greater degree of organization than has previously been the case and requires an urgent reassessment of strategy and a surge in the number of troops assigned to these areas."

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) was informed that over a month ago, a local chief allowed Fulanis to settle on land on a hillside near Kirim Village after they were ordered to leave Zangon Kataf LGA, also in Southern Kaduna, following a Fulani attack on Aduwan Village. In recent weeks the local community had begun to ask questions after it became apparent that the Fulanis were storing arms in the area.

The assault on the villages in Kaduna occurred during the same week that a series of attacks on villages in Wase and Riyom LGAs in neighboring Plateau State claimed the lives of at least 60 people, mostly women and children, and escalated local tensions. Prior to this, attacks in Riyom LGA over a two month period had claimed 16 lives.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "While attacks on remote villages by well-armed Fulanis have occurred sporadically since 2010, the recent escalation of assaults on villagers on the Plateau-Kaduna border, the consistent targeting of women and children and the mass displacement of inhabitants appear to be part of a deliberate attempt to rid these areas of their original inhabitants. It is worrying that armed groups can still move freely, attacking for lengthy periods despite a security presence in each state. Tackling this issue effectively will require a comprehensive and unified effort by the governments of Kaduna, Plateau and even Bauchi States to track down and apprehend the perpetrators."