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NIGERIA | Abducted Clergyman Found Dead

The body of a clergyman abducted in Kaduna State along with two colleagues was found in the bush one day after the body of a kidnapped senior military officer was discovered in similar circumstances.

Reverends Iliya Anto and Yakubu Dzarma of the United Church of Christ in Nigeria (UCCN), and Rev. Emmanuel Dzigau, the UCCN President, were abducted by armed men March 21 as they travelled on the Kaduna-Abuja Express Way on their way to clear a piece of land for the foundation of the church seminary.

Church sources informed the Nigerian media that the abductors called them March 22 with details of a location where they claimed to have left Rev. Anto, who was unwell. He had recently undergone an operation and required medication. Rescuers failed to find him at the stated location, and his abductors refused to provide further information, claiming the church had sent too many people to the area.

Rev. Anto's decomposing body was discovered in the bush March 30. Reverends Dzigau and Dzarma were freed that evening and are reportedly recovering in a private hospital in Kaduna. It is unclear whether a ransom was paid to secure their release.

On March 29, the Nigerian Army confirmed that Colonel Samaila Inusa, who was abducted by unknown gunmen in Kaduna on March 27, had been found dead in the bush. He was abducted by gunmen as he drove with his wife along Kaduna Refinery Road, in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State. His wife was released, and he was driven away in his own car.

According to an army statement, "most likely the late senior officer was killed same day he was kidnapped. This is because the body was found already decomposing around Ajyaita village off Eastern Bypass Kaduna, Kaduna State."

Earlier, the authorities offered a reward of \$4,978 for information on the Colonel's whereabouts.

Mervyn Thomas Chief Executive of CCW, said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of Rev. Anto and Colonel Inusa. Our prayers are with their families and with Reverends Dzarma and Dzigga as they recover from their ordeal. These abductions point to a worrying breakdown in law and order. We urge the authorities to step up security in the area and to bring the perpetrators to justice."