



6.6.16

## **NIGERIA | Armed Herdsmen Attack Village**

One person was killed and churches and homes set on fire during an attack by armed Fulani herdsmen on Ninte Village in the southern part of Kaduna State on May 28.

According to reports received by Christian Solidarity Worldwide Nigeria (CSWN), the herdsmen attacked the village at approximately 2 a.m., targeting homes and churches, including Tawaliu Baptist Church and the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA). Some displaced villagers are currently sheltering in a primary school under the protection of the security services, while others have fled to nearby villages. A man named Joshua Billa, who is believed to have been in his early 30s, was killed.

This was the latest in a series of assaults on Sanga Local Government Area (LGA), which have been ongoing for several years. During an earlier attack May 26, herdsmen armed with machetes attacked a man named Mr. Ango, who had complained after their cattle trespassed onto his farmland. Members of the local community rushed to assist Ango upon hearing his screams and pursued his assailants. He is currently receiving treatment at Kafanchan General Hospital. Local youth reportedly killed one of the assailants, resulting in the arrests of 10 villagers. It is believed that the assault on the village May 28 was launched in revenge.

Attacks by armed herdsmen on farming communities in the central Nigerian states of Plateau, Kaduna, Bauchi, Taraba and Benue have been ongoing for several years and are increasing in frequency. A series of attacks on the Agatu area of Benue State in late February left close to 500 villagers dead.

Violence is also increasing in frequency in southern Nigeria, with herdsmen implicated in abduction, extortion, rape and murder in several states. An attack in late April on Ukpabi-Nimbo Village in Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu State, in which at least 50 people were killed, 30 were seriously wounded and a Catholic church and around 11 homes burned down, caused particular outrage. A Fulani man detained after video footage of these murders was discovered on his mobile phone allegedly claimed that the attack was launched in retaliation for the death of a

Fulani man, and that over 100 Fulanis from several central and northern states participated in the killings, including some from Kaduna State.

In a press release issued in April, the group Muslims Against Terror condemned the killings by herdsmen. It also called for the perpetrators to be designated as terrorists and called for the government to “deal with them with the full power of the military.”

However, in contrast to resurgent Niger Delta militants, whose activities have elicited swift official condemnations and a strong military response, violence by the herders is yet to be decisively addressed by the Nigerian authorities. Beleaguered communities appear increasingly resorting to self-defense. On May 25, news agencies reported that the Ohaneze Youth Council (OYC) had established the Igbo Vigilante Group (IVG) to protect people in Abia, Anambra, Delta, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo and Rivers States.

On May 23, Governor Ayo Fayose of Ekiti State announced a ban on cattle grazing in the State, vowing to equip local hunters and urging people to defend themselves. The announcement was made following an attack on the Oke Ako community in Ikole LGA, in which two people were killed and others were injured by suspected herdsmen.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, “Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Ninte village, who have lost loved ones and homes in the latest bout of violence in Sanga LGA. The continuing absence of an effective and balanced security response to herder-related violence is disheartening and has clearly served to embolden perpetrators, enabling the violence to spread across the country. We call on Federal and State authorities to urgently address this threat to national security and unity. The emergence of vigilante groups is indicative of a worrying lack of confidence either in the government's willingness or in its ability to fulfil its duty of safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of certain sectors of the citizenry. These attacks must be met by a timely and appropriate defense of besieged communities. We urge Nigerian State and Federal authorities to ensure civilians are protected and purveyors of violence are brought to justice. Murder, rape, and destruction of property must be viewed as crimes under the law and addressed accordingly regardless of the tribe, creed or occupation of the perpetrators.”