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## **NIGERIA | Details Available on Death of Abducted Catholic Clergyman**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) learned that the Rev. Father John Adeyi, whose decomposing body was found June 23 in Benue State, may have died because he could not access his medication for his severe asthma. He was abducted April 24.

Father John Adeyi, vicar general of St. Bernard's Catholic Diocese of Otukpa in Benue State, was seized by armed men near Odoba village along the Otukpa-Enugu Road. According to local press reports, he was returning home after having successfully mediated between parishioners and the Odoba parish priest at the request of the Catholic Bishop of Otukpa.

His abductors initially demanded \$57,000 in ransom but later agreed to accept \$18,000.

However, despite the payment of \$7,000 by his family and an offer by Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom, of \$18,000 for information about his whereabouts, Father Adeyi was not released. His decaying remains were subsequently dumped by his kidnappers behind the Otukpa Secretariat in Ogbadibo Local Government Area (LGA) and were discovered June 23. According to Nigerian news outlets, Father Adeyi's brother identified the body.

Rev. Father Adeyi was the most senior priest in the Catholic Diocese of Otukpa and had recently celebrated 25 years in the priesthood.

In a comment to the Nigerian paper Sunday Vanguard, his mother, Mama Martha Kate Adeyi, said, "Fr. John had no problems with anybody, he served God and humanity with all his being, soul, spirit and body. He didn't deserve the treatment they meted to him as a servant of God. I am heartbroken, devastated, but God knows why it happened this way. I thank everyone who showed concern about his abduction and eventual death. I'm only pleading with government and law enforcement agencies to do justice in this matter by ensuring the arrest of the masterminds of this unfortunate incident. It is only then that Fr. John will find peace and the family will also be consoled."

In a statement, Governor Ortom described Father Adeyi as a peace-loving man of God and assured his family that his administration would ensure the perpetrators would be found and brought to justice. According to local media reports on June 28, the Benue Police Command has arrested one suspect in connection with the case and is continuing its search for others.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Father Adeyi and the Oktupa Diocese. It is both sad and reprehensible that clergymen, who dedicate their lives to serving for no financial gain, are being targeted for kidnapping and extortion. Father Adeyi is the second clergyman in central Nigeria to be found in this manner. On March 30, the decomposing body of Rev. Iliya Anto was discovered in Kaduna State, nine days after he and two other clergymen had been abducted. Such kidnappings seem to indicate a worrying breakdown in law and order. While we commend the Benue State authorities for the progress made so far in tracking down culprits, we also urge the Nigerian authorities to formulate and implement a comprehensive security solution to the kidnapping phenomenon, which is increasingly affecting citizens throughout the country."