News

A woman reacts during a protest in Abuja, Nigeria, Aug. 15, 2020. The demonstration was aga

A woman reacts during a protest in Abuja, Nigeria, Aug. 15, 2020. The demonstration was against the continued killings in southern Kaduna and insecurities in Nigeria. Deadly violence hit Christians in Africa Jan. 15, 2023, with a Catholic priest in northern Nigeria burned to death and as many as 17 Christians killed in a blast in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. (OSV News photo/Afolabi Sotunde, Reuters)

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Abuja, Nigeria — January 17, 2023

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A Nigerian priest was burned alive in his home in the country's north on Jan. 15, police said.

Fr. Isaac Achi was killed in the Paikoro area of Niger state after gunmen failed to break into his house and instead set it on fire, said Wasiu Abiodun, the police spokesman. A second priest living in the compound escaped with a gunshot wound to his shoulder, he said.

"Unfortunately, the bandits reportedly attempted to gain entrance into the residence, which seemed difficult," so they "set the house ablaze" and the Catholic priest burned to death, Wasiu said.

Nigerian authorities are struggling to stem rising violence in the north and central regions where armed groups target rural communities, killing thousands and abducting people to ransom. Security forces are often outnumbered and outgunned and suspects are seldom detained, residents said.

The attacks sometimes target religious figures such as clerics. In July last year, Fr. John Mark Chietnum was killed after he was kidnapped in the northwestern Kaduna state.

The Jan. 15 incident sparked international condemnation. In a statement, Antonio Tajani, the Italian foreign minister, called the attack "cowardly and inhuman."

Niger state Gov. Abubakar Sani Bello said the killing signaled that no one was safe. "These terrorists have lost it and drastic action is needed to end this ongoing carnage," he said.

Nigeria's Christian Association has asked authorities to investigate and do more to protect civilians. "Enough of the attacks and wanton killings of innocent Nigerian citizens," said Bulus Yohanna, the association's chairman.

[Associated Press journalist Frances D’Emilio in Rome, Italy contributed.]

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