

# Nigeria's Deepening Insecurity: A Decade of Killings and the Rising Threat to Christian Communities in Edo State

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Nigeria's security crisis did not emerge overnight; it has been building for more than a decade. Since 2011, the nation has witnessed a wide spectrum of violence—attacks on worship centres, killings of farmers, kidnappings on highways, herder-related clashes, and mass assaults on Christian communities across several states. Many of these attacks were not isolated incidents, but part of a growing pattern of coordinated brutality that communities have repeatedly described as *genocidal in effect*.

## A Decade of Violence: How We Got Here

In September 2013, Nigeria was shaken by several deadly attacks targeting Christian worshippers—most notably the violent assault on St. Andrew's Military Protestant Church in Jaji, Kaduna, and simultaneous attacks on rural Christian communities in Nasarawa and Benue during that period. The violence displaced thousands and signalled a broader shift toward the targeting of Christian settlements.

By September 2018, renewed attacks struck Christian-majority villages in Plateau and Benue States. In Plateau, over 100 Christians were killed in the series of reprisal and coordinated attacks that swept through Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, and Riyom. In Benue, multiple farming communities came under assault, forcing survivors into IDP camps. Human-rights groups and church leaders repeatedly warned that Christians in the Middle Belt were facing what many described as a “slow-motion genocide.”

## How These Trends Reached Edo State

Although Edo State was once perceived as a safer zone, the ripple effects of national insecurity eventually spread southward. Edo State has over the years experienced:

- farmer killings, such as the two farmers—Batemue Philip Ebo and Christopher Bello—killed in early 2025 in Okpekepe, Etsako East LGA.

- mob killings, including the tragic 28 March 2025 Uromi massacre where 16 northern travelers were lynched after being accused of kidnapping.
- attacks on security personnel, such as the Okpella incident where eight operatives were killed protecting a facility.
- ongoing highway kidnappings, especially on the Auchí–Benin–Ibillo axis.

These are not random crimes—they reflect the spread of violent networks operating across Kogi, Ondo, Delta, and Edo's porous borders.

## Benin City: No Longer a Safe Urban Bubble

Benin City, once a sanctuary from rural violence, has increasingly felt the pressure:

- cult-related killings
- kidnappings of clergy and political leaders
- attacks on church communities and travellers
- heightened fear restricting night movements and church programs

The pattern mirrors what was witnessed a decade earlier in northern and Middle Belt states.

## A National Pattern With Religious Undertones

The last few months have provided painful reminders that Christian communities remain heavily targeted:

- In Kwara, violent raids on Christian farming settlements led to deaths and displacement.
- In Benue (last month), church communities were attacked again, with multiple confirmed fatalities.
- In Edo (last month), kidnapping rings continued assaulting travellers and farmers, leaving families emotionally and financially broken.

- In Jos, the situation deteriorated so severely that a pastor reportedly conducted a mass burial for over 500 victims, many of whom were Christians killed in waves of attacks on surrounding villages.

These events show a dangerous pattern: communities that identify as Christian are being attacked disproportionately in multiple states, often with the same signature of brutality.

#### Why Edo State Is Now Highly Vulnerable

Edo's current spike is not accidental; it stems from:

- Border proximity to three kidnapping hot zones: Kogi, Ondo, Delta
- Porous forest belts that shelter armed groups
- Weakening community policing structures, leaving towns exposed
- Movement of violent networks southward, especially after military pressure in the North and Middle Belt

As attacks intensified nationally, Edo—positioned along key transit and smuggling routes—became an attractive corridor for armed groups.

#### Connecting the Past to the Present

What began in 2011 as isolated insurgency has, by 2025, become:

- a national kidnapping industry
- a farmer-targeting crisis
- a pattern of violence that disproportionately affects Christian communities
- a threat extending from northern Nigeria all the way to states like Edo

When placed together—September 2013, September 2018, the Middle Belt crises, the March 2025 Uromi massacre, the Okpekpe killings, the Okpella ambush, the Kwara and Benue attacks last month, and the mass burial in Jos—the picture becomes clearer:

Nigeria is experiencing a sustained cycle of violence that many Christian communities, clergy, and advocacy groups now describe as genocidal in practice, if not yet formally recognized in law.

#### A Crisis That Demands Documentation

Edo State is now a frontline in this expanding insecurity. Its people, like those in Plateau, Benue, and Kaduna, face the fear that has haunted northern Christians for over a decade.

If we are committed to truth, justice, and human dignity, then these patterns must be documented and confronted—not ignored.