



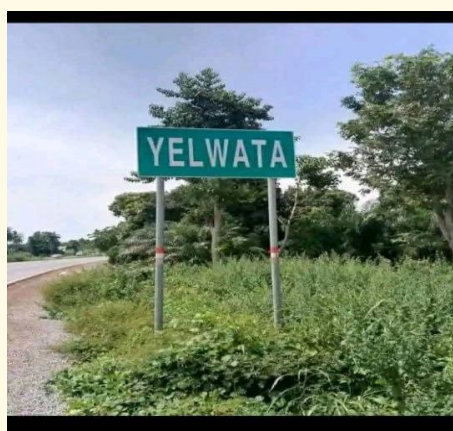
CASA GENERALIZIA

## **SPIRITAN NEWSFLASH**

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### **The Genocide at Yelwata and its effect on Spiritan Mission in the Province of Nigeria North-East**



While it may be argued that insecurity is not new in Nigeria, judging from the prolonged menace of the Boko Haram in North Eastern and other parts of Nigeria, the conflict between crop Farmers and Nomadic herders may also be as old as the history of Agriculture. The dimension the current crises have taken, the renewed wave of attacks from the Fulani Herdsmen and their mercenary assassins that is taking place especially around the Benue Valley and North-Central Nigeria leaves more to be said. The mode of attacks is done in the most gruesome manner; as the invaders destroy farm settlements and produce, burn down houses, kidnap, rape women, shoot and butcher defenceless people. The situation is so bizarre that people are being murdered

in the most horrific way imaginable while several others are kidnapped for ransom. The Christian community in Nigeria views these killings as a jihad, even though the government has repeatedly

refused to accept this. The fact also is that most of the places directly affected and hardest hit by the crises are the Christian dominated areas of the Northern Nigeria. The states affected mostly are Plateau, Taraba, Southern Kaduna and Benue States. The Christian Church in Benue State, the strongest hold of the Spiritan Mission in Northern Nigeria is actually the prime target!



The last attack that took place at Yelwata on the 13th of June, 2025, was one case too many! More than 200 hundred persons (mostly the aged, women and children) were exterminated. Yelwata is a small town in Guma Local Government of Benue State with an estimated population of less than 5,000 persons who are Tiv people by tribe, almost 99.8% Christians and over 80% Catholics. Previously, the place used to be an outstation of Sacred Heart Parish, Udei, one of the earliest parishes began by the Spiritan missionaries in Makurdi Diocese. The population of the town has increased in recent times because of the rural-town

migrations that have been necessitated by the persistent attacks of the same herders from the surrounding villages. Most of these people who were killed are actually Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who fleeing from the importunate attacks from their dispersed village settlements are taking refuge with extended family members and relatives. This explains why most of the persons were clustered in their houses that fateful night of the attack. Very typical of the attack in recent times, the invaders came late at night around 23:00 hours from the end of Nasarawa State bordering the settlement, numbering about 200 of them, all fully armed, while some of them engaged the police check point nearby, the others launched attacks on the helpless persons who were either burnt to death in their sleep or those who woke up and tried to escape were shot or macheted to death.

Like said earlier, even though the hostilities between the Fulani and Tiv people has worsened in the past fifteen years, this year's happenings have been the worst case scenarios. Matters actually got out of hand when the current Bishop of Makurdi Diocese testified before the USA Congress about the continuous killing of Christians in Nigeria. The Nigerian Government both at the Federal and State levels has been denying that the attacks are not religiously motivated and in some cases even playing the Ostrich. Places where we have our Spiritan presence like Agatu, Sankera, Abako Otobi, Naka, Agagbe, Aondoana, Udei, Logo, etc have been overrun by these bandits. The state security agencies are doing nothing stop this havoc. Meanwhile, the killings have continued unabated. No single day passes without the report of killings in more than one place within Benue State.

It is sad to also note that, besides the humanitarian crises evidently in the hands of several confreres who are directly affected, among the numbers that were killed that fateful night are the immediate family members of one of our confreres who is a deacon in SIST about rounding off his initial formation before his ordination and to proceed for mission to Zimbabwe, Revd Jacob Iorjaan, CSSp. Jacob is from Yelwata and in this attack alone, he lost thirteen family members! Two of his paternal uncles had their nuclear families completely wiped out on that ill-fated night!

Like Pope Leo XIV did say in his Angelus prayer address of Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2025, we need your prayers for peace in Nigeria and Benue State particularly. Our people do not need much to survive, they are simple people that need just the basic peace to return back to their farms so as to fend for themselves and their family members. Benue state that use to be the food basket of the nation is now filled with blood. May Jesus Christ the prince of peace come to our aid!



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