



Promoting Human Rights

RE: KILLINGS AT THE ABABGENA INTERNAL DISPLACE PERSONS CAMP

Lawyers Alert condemns in the strongest terms the attack by gunmen believed to be Herdsmen on an Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camp situated in Abagena Community in Benue State. The attack which led to the death of 7 persons and several others wounded is said to have happened on the 27th day of April 2021.

Lawyers Alert recalls the constitutional obligations of governments on the security and welfare of the people. It is the primary responsibility of governments to protect the lives and property of the people, and therefore it amounts to sheer abdication of such duties when lives are lost owing to extrajudicial killings. This is especially so when the victims are vulnerable citizens in Internally Displaced Camps. Every person has a right to live and enjoy his life in accordance with the law. As the saying goes, a country is noted more by how it treats its weakest. For Internally Displaced Persons to be extrajudicially killed in camps, is it, to say the least, a stain on the conscience of our nation.

The situation in Abagena, as also witnessed in many parts of the country, gives Lawyers Alert cause for concern. The killing of Internally Displaced persons, many of whom may not have been comprehensively healed from the trauma of losing their family members and other loved ones is indeed a sad situation. This attack will have also worsened the state of vulnerability of women and children in this camp, instilling fear of uncertainty in the mind of inhabitants.

We note the regularity with which kidnappings and killings have been taking place across the states of Nigeria. The recent kidnappings of University students both in Makurdi and Kaduna by unknown gunmen and the eventual killing of some are ills are trouble nation can do without. We call for synergy by various tiers of government which should be deliberate in tightening up security.

In light of the foregoing, Lawyers Alert recommends the following:

- Lawyers Alert urges both the Federal and the Benue State governments to direct immediate and thorough investigations into the circumstances surrounding the massacre.
- That the government should arrest and prosecute anyone found culpable, directly and indirectly in the massacre.
- That the various governments should tighten up security around Abagena and other IDP Camps in Benue State and around the country.

- That the government should identify and pay compensation to the families of the victims of the massacre
- That the government should commence earnest preparations towards the return of the IDPs to their ancestral homes
- That the government should intensify peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms in the state.

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