

# CASE STUDY

## Attack on St Ignatius's Church, Nigeria



Father Joseph Gor



Father Felix Tyolaha

### APRIL 2018

Father Joseph Gor and Father Felix Tyolaha were among 19 Catholics who died after gunmen opened fire at a 5.30am funeral service in St Ignatius's Church. Around 30 terrorists entered the church in Mbalom in Nigeria's Middle Belt on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018. Nine-year-old altar server Oryiman Akule said: "As soon as the priest started the Mass, he sighted some people with guns running towards the church and alerted people but, almost at the same time, they began to shoot... We ran and hid in one building." Following the church attack, assailants shot at local residents. More than 50 homes were torched as people retreated, and food barns were set ablaze. Authorities believed Islamist Fulani herdsmen were responsible. Father Gor, one of the priests killed, had been warning about the ongoing threat posed by Fulani extremists.

**Sources:** Murcadha O Flaherty and John Pontifex, "Bishops – President should resign for inaction over 'killing fields and mass graveyard'", *Aid to the Church in Need (UK) News*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <https://acnuk.org/news/bishops-president-should-resign-for-inaction-over-nigerias-killing-fields-and-mass-graveyard/>; "Eighteen killed in Benue church by suspected herdsmen", *The Guardian (Nigeria)*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <https://guardian.ng/news/eighteen-killed-in-benue-church-by-suspected-herdsmen/>; Hembadoon Orsar, "Nigeria: Benue Church Attack – the Untold Story of Ukpo, Ayar Mbalom", *All Africa*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201806220622.html> (all sites accessed 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019).

A Christian prays in a church in Kaduna, in Nigeria's Middle Belt.