

Nigerian Christians decry demolition of churches in Jigawa state



Christchurch Cathedral, Lagos, Nigeria

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Nigerian Christians were alarmed after the authorities demolished two church buildings in Dutse, the capital of the northern state of Jigawa.

On Jan. 11, bulldozers, escorted by police officers, tore down the buildings of the Redeem Christian Church of God and the Lord Chosen Church, World Watch Monitor reported.

Rev. Yakubu Musa, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) for Jigawa, said that the authorities arrived at the Redeem Church at around 10 a.m. The police blocked the entrance to prevent church members from entering the building, and those who tried to take pictures were chased away. The authorities started demolishing the second church at around 12

noon.

“It was a terrible experience, with so many Christians who witnessed the demolition crying. I felt so bitter because we were in a situation where you have been cheated and you cannot talk,” said Musa.

Alhaji Garba Isa, the Executive Secretary of Urban Development Board, said that the buildings were torn down because the churches were built without permits. He claimed that notices have been sent to the churches three times to discontinue the development of the buildings. However, Musa stated that neither the pastors of the church nor the leadership of CAN received a notice of demolition.

“They just came in unexpectedly and they demolished everything. Nobody was allowed to remove any valuables in the church buildings and other nearby properties,” he said.

He added that both churches have applied for the necessary documents but the government refused to grant them.

Musa further noted that none of the 36 churches in Dutse have been given building permission because the government has not responded to the applications.

“We feel we are equally citizens of this country and we have the rights to be allowed to practise our religion. But this demolition was done out of injustice and discrimination,” he remarked.

Six more churches in Jigawa are slated for demolition. The authorities have not indicated any plans for compensation or other alternatives. The congregation of the two demolished churches will be holding services and other weekly programs out in the open.

Jigawa is one of the 12 states that adopted Sharia in the 2000s. Nigeria is currently ranked on the Open Doors World

Watch List as the 12th most difficult place to live in as a
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