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NIGERIA Three churches and a vicarage demolished in Kano State

Two churches belonging to the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), a Baptist Church, and a pastor's house have been demolished by Fulani youths in Kano State, northern Nigeria, after a few members of the Muslim community objected to their existence.

The old ECWA church building in Kwasam, Kiru Local Government Area (LGA) was burnt to the ground at around 11am on 19 May. At the same time, a newly completed church structure was demolished and the pastor's home was set ablaze, destroying all of his property. The ECWA pastor is now in hiding, after elements of the mob vowed they would not leave the area until he was dead.

Prior to this demolition, the ECWA Church leadership had been forced to appear before a *Shari'a* court. Since its members are from tribes indigenous to the area, the church argued that the land on which the church stood was their inheritance, adding that they had nowhere else to go. Nevertheless, the court ruled in favour of the complainants.

The Baptist Church in Banaka, Takai LGA, which was demolished on 15 May, has now faced demolition on four separate occasions. After the previous demolition, a group of Christians from Kastina State paid for the construction of a new building, and also drilled a well for church members to use. However, during the demolition, the well was blocked off completely.

Stuart Windsor National Director of CSW Nigeria says: "It is unacceptable that churches can still be destroyed on the whim of a few extremists. These demolitions violate Nigeria's constitutional and international legal undertakings to uphold religious freedom and freedom of assembly. In addition, the constitution stipulates that non-Muslims cannot be brought before *Shari'a* courts unless they have agreed to this in advance and in writing, thus there is no valid basis for these demolitions. To combat such impunity, it is vital that the Federal Government of Nigeria takes measures to ensure that the Kano State authorities bring the perpetrators of these acts to justice swiftly, and offer timely and adequate compensation and protection to the churches and to the ECWA Church pastor."