

Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles



OLA District,
Ardfoyle Convent,
Ballintemple,
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Ireland.

27 November 2025

URGENT Appeal for Prayer and Solidarity

Abduction at St Mary's Catholic Schools, Papiri, Nigeria

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends in Mission,

You may have heard the deeply distressing news of a mass abduction at St Mary's Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in Papiri, Niger State, Nigeria – a school operated by the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) on behalf of the Catholic Diocese of Kontagora.

On Friday, 21 November, armed men entered the school compound during the night and abducted 315 students and staff from the dormitories. These include very young children from the primary school. The scale and cruelty of this attack have caused profound shock and anguish among families, the local community, and the OLA Sisters who serve there.

Approximately fifty children managed to escape and have since been reunited with their families. The remaining 253 children and 12 staff are still missing, and there has been no verified information regarding their whereabouts, their condition, or the movements of those holding them.

While security forces have been deployed and authorities have stated that efforts are ongoing, no confirmed details of those efforts have been released publicly.

The abduction has also deeply affected those connected with the school beyond Nigeria.

St Mary's in Papiri is twinned with St Mary's High School in Newry, Co Down, a relationship that has fostered strong ties between the two school communities. Staff and students in Newry are holding their sister school in prayer at this painful time.

The situation is critical. Families are living in fear and uncertainty, gathering in vigil and waiting for news that has not yet come. Our sisters in Nigeria are accompanying them closely, offering what support they can in circumstances marked by grief, exhaustion, and shock.

Sr Mary T. Barron, Congregational Leader of the OLA has appealed to the Irish Government to use all available diplomatic channels to support efforts toward the safe

return of the abducted. She has emphasised the urgency of coordinated international engagement, and the unbearable suffering now carried by the school community.

In this moment, we ask the missionary and religious family in Ireland to join us in urgent and sustained prayer:

- For the safe return of the students and staff.
- For strength, protection, and courage for their families.
- For the OLA Sisters and Church community in Kontagora who continue to support those affected.
- For wisdom and resolve among all authorities involved, that every possible avenue is pursued swiftly and effectively.
- For an end to the violence that threatens so many communities in Niger State and across Nigeria.

We hold firm in our belief that prayer offered in solidarity carries real strength.

At this time of immense suffering, we ask you to keep the people of Papiri close to your hearts, your communities, and in your liturgies.

We will share further updates as reliable information becomes available.

With gratitude for your communion and support,
Sr. Mary Crowley OLA
District Leader, Ireland