

## PRESS STATEMENT

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### ESCALATING INSECURITY IN BENUE STATE: A NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION

The Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative (also known as Partners West Africa – Nigeria, PWAN) expresses deep concern over the worsening security situation in Benue State, where repeated violent attacks on communities have led to mass displacement, the loss of lives, and widespread destruction of property. These attacks—often attributed to armed herders and criminal elements—have become increasingly frequent, with little visible deterrence or accountability across Nigeria’s security, political, and judicial institutions.

The persistent failure to protect lives and prevent these atrocities reflects a breakdown in both preventive and responsive mechanisms at local, state, and federal levels. In particular, the leadership of Nigeria’s security architecture—including the Nigeria Police Force, the military, and intelligence agencies—must be held accountable for the continuing inability to safeguard vulnerable communities and deter armed non-state actors. There is an urgent need for coordinated and proactive security deployment, improved intelligence gathering, and stronger civilian oversight.

Equally critical is the activation of judicial accountability through independent investigations and the prosecution of perpetrators. Political leaders must demonstrate the will to act decisively, allocate resources appropriately, and enforce institutional accountability at all levels. Anything less reinforces a culture of impunity and undermines public trust in governance and the rule of law.

We are particularly alarmed by the devastating impact on women, children, and the elderly. Displacement has rendered thousands vulnerable to hunger, exposure, and violence, with women and girls at increased incidences of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse. Children have been cut off from education and healthcare, while many elderly persons—often unable to flee—have been abandoned in the wake of attacks.

The violence has also severely affected food security, both in Benue State and beyond. As Nigeria’s "Food Basket," Benue plays a vital role in national agricultural production. The destruction of farms, forced migration of farmers, and loss of livestock have led to a dramatic decline in food availability, deepening the hunger crisis across affected communities and threatening regional food systems.

We call on the Federal Government of Nigeria to urgently deploy coordinated security operations to protect civilians and restore order. We urge the Benue State Government to strengthen

humanitarian response mechanisms, with targeted support for women, children, and displaced populations.

Security agencies must act to forestall the occupation of deserted lands by persons believed to have links to the killings and violence.

Further, we appeal to the National Assembly to exercise legislative oversight and promote policies that address land-based conflicts, armed group proliferation, and climate-induced displacement.

Benue State must not be allowed to slide into protracted insecurity and abandonment. The situation demands urgent, sustained, and inclusive action that priorities human dignity, civilian protection, and long-term peacebuilding.

Partners West Africa – Nigeria (PWAN) stands in solidarity with the people of Benue and remains committed to supporting rights-based, gender-responsive, and community-led approaches to national security and social justice.

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