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# Katsina: Fresh attacks amid bandits' release plan

Katsina State has recorded fresh attacks on civilians even as the government prepares to initiate the release of many bandits held in custody as part of community-driven peace agreements. Bandits were said to have attacked a wedding convoy at Unguwar Nagunda village in Kankara Local Government Area of the state and killed at least two [...]



Some of the residents affected by bandits' attack in Gidan Mantau Village, Malumfashi Local Government Area of Katsina State, in August 2025

**Katsina State has recorded fresh attacks on civilians even as the government prepares to initiate the release of many bandits held in custody as part of community-driven peace agreements.**

Bandits were said to have attacked a wedding convoy at Unguwar Nagunda village in Kankara Local Government Area of the state and killed at least two guests on Sunday night.

The attack was said to have also led to 17 people, including the bride, being abducted and several others injured. Eight of the abductees later escaped and were reunited with their families on Monday.

One person was reportedly killed in another attack on Jaga village along the Kankara–Sheme Road, also in Kankara Local Government Area, on Sunday.

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The state's Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Nasir Muazu, had, in an interview with DCL Hausa on Saturday, justified the government's plan to facilitate the release of 70 persons facing trial for alleged involvement in banditry as part of efforts towards consolidating peace deals with armed groups operating across the state.

But in another interview with the BBC yesterday, the commissioner stated that the exact number of bandits to be released had not been determined.

He said the state government had set up reconciliation committees across local government areas to compile the names of detained bandits for review by the courts before any release is carried out.

Residents of Unguwar Nagunda village, who spoke to our correspondent yesterday, said the bandits targeted the wedding guests shortly after they arrived at Unguwar Nagunda.

A security source said security forces had been mobilised and “are currently combing various locations to rescue the remaining victims within Kankara and nearby isolated bushes across the state.”

Speaking to *Daily Trust* yesterday on the attack on Jaga, a resident said, “Although we have been enjoying what could be described as a fragile peace, the bandits appear to be resurfacing.

“The general belief here is that they are among those opposed to the peace deal recently signed in Kakumi village of Bakori Local Government Area, where five LGAs—Kankara, Malumfashi, Kafur, Funtua and the host Bakori—participated.”

Residents of Kankara called on the relevant authorities to intensify engagement with the bandits while also appealing for the deployment of more security operatives to the area.

The Katsina State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Mu’azu, confirmed the incidents to our correspondent and promised to provide the contact of the chairman of the Kankara Local Government Security Committee for further details, but he never did.

### **Commissioner lists peace deal conditions**

In his latest interview with the BBC, the commissioner noted that when the communities reached peace agreements with the bandits, certain conditions were agreed upon by both sides.

He listed the conditions as including allowing the bandits access to markets to buy and sell; allowing them to visit hospitals for medical treatment and to see their relatives; allowing them freedom of movement without harassment or intimidation; allowing them to mix freely with the public; an end to attacks on towns and villages; an end to kidnappings for ransom; release of kidnapped persons; and release of bandits being held by government authorities.

Muazu told the BBC that the conditions were being implemented gradually and that the process had now reached the stage of releasing the bandits in custody.

He recalled that the state government had previously maintained that it would not negotiate directly with bandits, although it did not stop communities from doing so.

He explained that the government got involved in the process “in view of the peace and stability recorded across the state as a result of the peace agreements.”

According to him, “Katsina State Government is a government of the people, and therefore, whatever the people do in pursuit of peace, the government will not stop them or undermine their efforts.

“As a government, whatever the people do, as long as it does not violate the law, the government will support it for the development of our society,” he said.

The commissioner added that the government had seen the benefits of the peace deal, noting that there are communities that have gone nearly one year without experiencing any bandit attacks.

“For example, Jibia Local Government Area, since the peace agreement reached on February 28, 2025, has recorded no attack. The same applies to Safana and Batsari Local Government Areas. In fact, in nearly 19 local government areas previously affected, the problem has reduced by about 95 per cent.

“This effort made by the communities should not be undermined by the government failing to fulfil the promises made to the bandits,” Muazu said.

### **Govt raises c'ttee to compile detained bandits' names**

The commissioner said reconciliation committees had been set up at the local government level to collect the names of detained bandits from those involved in the peace process.

“These committees are compiling the names, and so far, the process has not been completed, let alone determining the exact number,” he stated.

According to him, once the compilation is completed, the names will be forwarded to the state government, which will, in turn, present them to the courts handling the cases for review.

“The courts will examine the cases to ensure that nothing violates the law before the plan is implemented,” he said.

The commissioner explained why the issue of immediate disarmament was not included among the initial conditions for the peace agreement.

According to him, “Katsina State has a large population of Fulani pastoralists with substantial livestock living close to forest areas. If they are left without weapons to defend their livestock, people from other states or even other countries could come and steal all their animals.”

Muazu disclosed that the state government was planning how to block the channels through which the bandits acquire weapons before collecting those already in their possession.

### **Mixed reactions trail bandits' release plan**

A security analyst, Abubakar Ibrahim, said the release of the bandits should not be regarded as a prisoner swap.

According to him, “These suspects are criminals and should be treated as such. Many of those proposed for release are notorious and may eventually return to the bush.”

A former Assistant Director of the Department of State Security, Mamman Mannir Murtala, described the move as perhaps the only practical option left to break the cycle of violence. He urged critics to allow those championing the peace process to focus on achieving lasting peace in the state.

The chairman of the Security Committee in Danmusa, Buhari Salisu Yantumaki, who also serves as secretary to the 19 local government areas affected by banditry, insisted the proposed release poses no threat and is crucial to sustaining the peace deal.

“Those opposing the peace deal are mostly people living in the cities. Go to the affected rural communities and see the consequences if care is not taken. Villagers are exhausted and desperate; violence has pushed them to the brink,” he said.