

'We Are Being Tagged Bandits, Boko Haram' – Northerners In South-West



North

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Some northerners residing in South-West states have decried what they describe as increasing harassment, profiling and discrimination amid heightened security concerns in parts of the subregion.

Speaking with Daily Trust, Ahmad S. Salihu, Sarkin Samari of Ile-Ife in Osun State and Chairman of the Arewa Development Support Group, Osun State chapter, said northerners in the South-West are facing growing challenges due to rising fears over insecurity.



He said the recent abduction of students and teachers in Oyo State heightened tension across the subregion, leading to increased vigilance among residents but also resulting in the harassment of innocent people.



“On Thursday, a vigilante group in Ile-Ife rescued six northern youths from being lynched. The youths had travelled from the North to Osun State in a truck conveying cattle, sheep and goats.

“They were dropped in Ibodi, an area near Ilesa with a sizeable northern population, and were heading to Ife-Wara in Ilesa West Local Government Area, where there is also a Hausa community,” he said.

Salihu explained that after spending several days on the truck, the youths were dirty and dusty. Rather than freshening up after arriving, they boarded commercial motorcycles and headed towards Ile-Ife.

“Some youths intercepted them along the way. Seeing their appearance and the bags they carried, they concluded that they were bandits and were about to lynch them,” he said.

He credited local vigilantes with preventing the attack.

“We work closely with the vigilante group. When they saw what was happening, they intervened and took custody of the youths. They contacted the Sarkin Hausawa of Ile-Ife, who in turn informed me.

“We met the youths and questioned them. We discovered that they were simply travellers from the North who had spent days on a livestock truck, which explained their appearance.

“They were handed over to us, and we contacted leaders of the Arewa community in their destination town and directed them accordingly. Without the intervention of the vigilantes, those six travellers could have been killed,” he said.

Salihu advised northerners travelling to the South-West to exercise caution and avoid actions that could arouse suspicion.

“They should avoid travelling on livestock trucks where possible and refrain from activities such as indiscriminate hunting or anything else that may cause people to mistake them for criminals,” he said.

Similarly, a leader of the Fulani community in Ekiti State, Malam Zayyanu Muhammad, said Fulani and Hausa residents were facing increasing difficulties due to security concerns in parts of Kwara and neighbouring states.

“This has led to indiscriminate arrests of our people, especially travellers. Many are arrested, harassed and maltreated on a daily basis.

“Agro Rangers, Amotekun personnel and other security outfits also harass people engaged in livestock rearing. The situation is becoming worrisome as the election season approaches,” he said.

False bandit alarm leads to killing of motorcyclist in Lagos

The Lagos State Police Command has debunked viral social media reports claiming that armed bandits invaded Ibeju-Lekki, Imota, Oke-Afo and other parts of the state to attack schools and abduct children.

In a statement issued on Monday, the Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, described the reports as false and intended to create fear and panic among residents.

“There is currently no security crisis, invasion or coordinated attack on any school or community in Ibeju-Lekki, Imota, Oke-Afo or any other part of Lagos State.

“The command wishes to reassure members of the public that schools across the state remain safe, while the police and other security agencies continue to maintain adequate security presence and surveillance in all communities,” the statement said.

The police, however, disclosed that the false alarm resulted in the death of a 24-year-old commercial motorcyclist, Kulaha Ayuba, who was wrongly identified as a “Fulani bandit.”

“Regrettably, the spread of this false alarm has already resulted in a tragic and avoidable loss of life. Some youths, acting on unverified claims that armed bandits had invaded the area, allegedly labelled him a Fulani bandit, attacked and fatally assaulted him.

“His motorcycle was reportedly stolen, while his body was later discovered in a swamp within the community,” the statement added.

The command said 15 suspects had been arrested in connection with the incident and are currently under investigation.

It warned that those found responsible for originating or spreading false and inciting information capable of causing public disorder, ethnic tension or violence would be prosecuted.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Olohundare Jimoh, urged residents to remain calm, vigilant and law-abiding, and to report suspicious activities through official channels rather than relying on unverified social media reports.