

Bandits Kill Another Chief Imam, 2 Others In Sokoto



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The Chief Imam of Talluje village in Bodinga Local Government Area of Sokoto State has reportedly been killed in a fresh bandit attack that also claimed the lives of two other residents, left several people abducted and forced hundreds to flee their homes.

The attack, which began at about 4pm on Wednesday, targeted Talluje and Chofi villages in Danchadi District.

The latest incident brings to three the number of chief imams killed by bandits in Sokoto State within the past few weeks.

Sources told our correspondent that the assailants launched coordinated attacks on both communities simultaneously, shooting indiscriminately before fleeing with an unspecified number of rustled livestock.

A community leader in Danchadi said the bandits killed the chief imam of Talluje, Malam Bashar and two other persons whose identities had yet to be confirmed.

He added that the attacks triggered mass displacement, with residents, mostly women and children, fleeing on foot to safer areas in Danchadi and Bodinga town.

Another resident confirmed that the attackers also rustled a large number of livestock, although the exact figure could not be immediately verified.

One of the residents who fled Talluje, Malam Mainasara Danjuma, said the gunmen invaded the village at about 4pm when many people were on their farms, while others were at home resting.

He said the attackers remained in the community until about 12 midnight, going from house to house looting valuables, including mobile phones.

He appealed to the government to come to the aid of the affected communities.

A senior police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to comment publicly on the incident, confirmed the attack and the killing of the chief imam.

“We have received reports of the attack and have mobilised our anti-kidnapping unit to the area because there are fears the bandits may return,” the officer said.

The spokesperson of the Sokoto State Police Command, DSP Ahmad Rufa’i, confirmed the attack but said he had not been fully briefed on the incident and could therefore not confirm the number of casualties or whether any residents were abducted.

Why imams fall victim

Commenting on the recurring killing of Chief Imams during bandit attacks, the Turakin Gobir, Alhaji Sirajo Isa, said the clerics often become victims because most attacks occur at prayer time.

He explained that bandits usually storm communities while residents are observing prayers, surrounding mosques and opening fire on worshippers, making it difficult for those inside to escape.

“The Imam is usually the one leading the prayers and, naturally, he is often the last person to leave the mosque. In the confusion, he becomes one of the easiest victims,” Isa said.

He, however, noted that the clerics were not necessarily being singled out for assassination but were often killed as a result of the circumstances surrounding the attacks.

“It is not that the bandits specifically target Imams. They become victims because of the role they play during congregational prayers,” he added.

Also commenting on the development, a Sokoto-based security analyst, Basharu Altine Guyawa, said there was no evidence to suggest that bandits deliberately target Islamic clerics.

According to him, unlike the Lakurawa group, bandits are not driven by religious ideology and do not single out Imams because of their positions.

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