

Jilli airstrike triggers outrage as death toll rises above 60, military orders probe

By : Seye Olumide, Azimazi Momoh Jimoh, Abuja, Johnson Eyangho, Njadvara Musa, Rotimi Agboluaje, Sodiq Omolaoye

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Minister of Defence, General Christopher Musa (rtd)

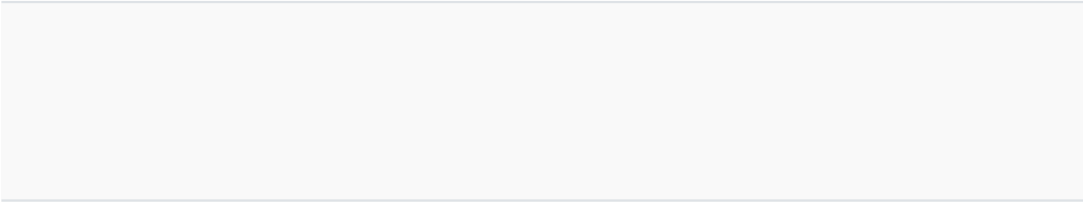
Outrage and scrutiny intensified yesterday over the [Jilli airstrike](#) along the Borno–Yobe border as rights groups, political leaders and residents demanded accountability over reported civilian deaths.

The military, however, defended the operation as intelligence-led, even as it ordered a probe and maintained it targeted an [ISWAP logistics hub](#).

The death toll, meanwhile, has risen to over 60 as more bodies were recovered from the market and injured victims were evacuated to hospitals in Geidam and Damaturu.

[Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar](#) condemned the airstrike, describing the incident as a failure in the protection of civilians.

In a statement, Atiku said the development represents a serious national concern, stating that the loss of civilian lives during security operations raises questions about existing safeguards.



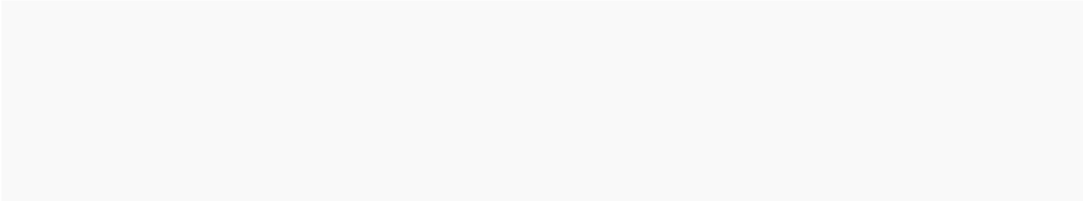
He noted that although the operation may have targeted insurgents, the civilian casualties highlight the continued risks faced by ordinary Nigerians from both armed groups and security interventions.

The former vice president questioned the level of protection available to citizens, asking how long Nigerians would remain vulnerable to threats from non-state actors and institutions responsible for their safety.

He compared the situation with international practices, citing a recent United States military operation in which extensive resources were deployed to rescue a single pilot, as an indication of the priority placed on human life.

“At home, we must ask: what is the value of Nigerian lives?” he said, calling for a reassessment of operational procedures and accountability mechanisms within the security system.

Atiku urged authorities to conduct an urgent review of military engagement protocols to prevent similar incidents, stressing the need for transparency, responsibility and corrective action.



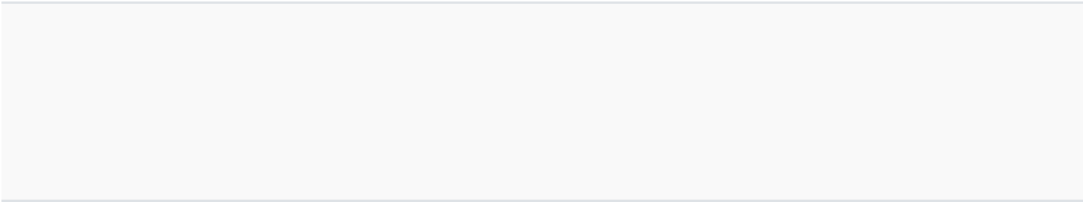
He also extended condolences to the families of the victims and affected communities, urging the government to uphold its constitutional duty to protect citizens.

He added that the protection of lives remains central to national security and should guide all operations.

Also, [Amnesty International](#) condemned the airstrike in a statement. It cited witness accounts indicating that three military jets fired on the market yesterday. It added that the emergency unit of Geidam General Hospital had received at least 35 people with severe injuries.

Amnesty International described the use of air raids in such circumstances as unlawful, stating that deploying deadly force in that manner reflects disregard for civilian lives.

It called on Nigerian authorities to conduct an immediate, impartial investigation into the incident and ensure that anyone found responsible is held accountable.



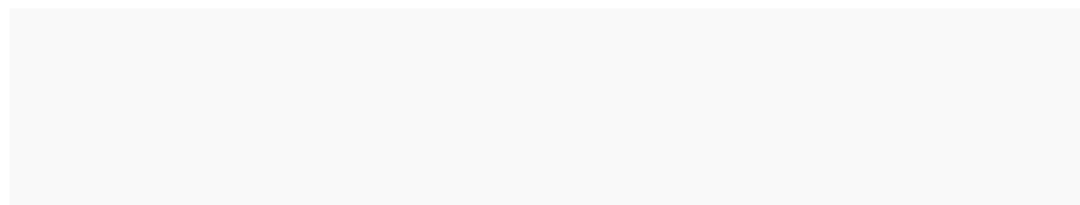
The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) condemned the incident, describing it as tragic and troubling, stating that it reflects a recurring pattern of civilian harm during counterterrorism operations. It extended condolences to victims and their families and called for an urgent, transparent and independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the strike.

Executive Director of CISLAC, Auwal Ibrahim Musa, said in a statement yesterday that evidence from similar incidents indicates structural gaps, including weak intelligence verification, limited precision-targeting capacity and operational pressure for rapid results.

According to him, airstrikes in conflict zones often rely on single-source or outdated intelligence, particularly where insurgents blend with civilian populations, increasing the risk of fatal errors.

“We demand the establishment of a credible, civilian-led investigative panel comprising the [National Human Rights Commission \(NHRC\)](#), civil society actors and international observers where necessary, to ensure accountability and public disclosure of findings,” he said.

CISLAC also called for adequate compensation and support for victims and their families.



The group recommended the immediate adoption of a comprehensive civilian protection framework to institutionalise civilian harm mitigation and response measures. These include mandatory civilian risk assessments before strikes, the creation of no-strike lists covering markets, hospitals and religious centres, as well as real-time abort protocols when civilian presence is detected.

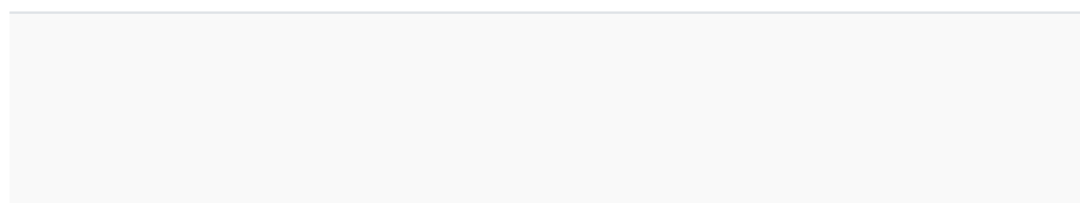
It further urged the Nigerian military to adopt global best practices in counterterrorism operations, including multi-layered intelligence verification, persistent surveillance before engagement and improved civil-military coordination with local actors such as the [Civilian Joint Task Force](#).

Yobe says Jilli air strike targeted B'Haram stronghold, confirms civilian casualties

Meanwhile, the Yobe State Government said the air strike on Jilli market in Borno State targeted a Boko Haram stronghold, not civilians.

In a statement issued yesterday, Dahiru Abdulsalam, Special Adviser on Security Matters to the Yobe State Governor, said the operation was carried out by the air component of Operation Hadin Kai.

He said the strike targeted Jilli in Gubio Local Government Area of Borno State, described as a [Boko Haram enclave](#).



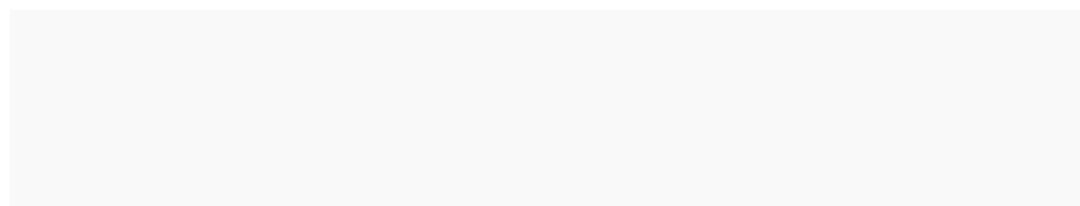
“The attention of the Yobe State Government has been drawn to online reports suggesting an attack on the people of Geidam Local Government Area,” the statement said.

“It has become necessary to set the records straight. The Air Component of the Joint Task Force (Northeast) [Operation Hadin Kai](#) conducted an air strike mission on Jilli... yesterday, Saturday, 11th April 2025.”

Abdulsalam said some residents of Geidam Local Government Area in Yobe State were affected because they had travelled to the weekly market.

“Some people from Geidam LGA bordering Gubio LGA in Borno State who went to the Jilli weekly market were affected,” he said.

He added that the victims had been evacuated to Geidam Specialist Hospital and were receiving treatment.



The Yobe State Emergency Management Agency confirmed the incident, describing it as an accidental air strike involving civilians at Jilli Saturday Market.

In a statement issued yesterday, the agency said the casualties included traders from Geidam Local Government Area.

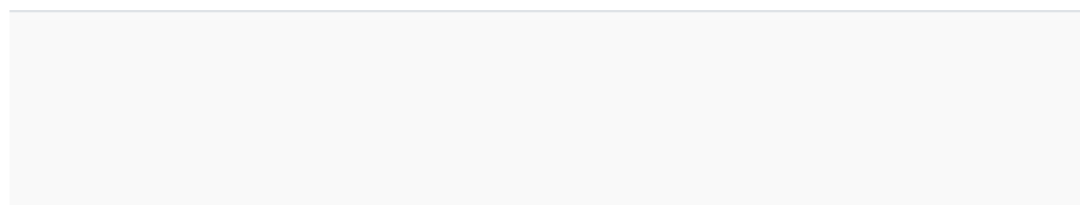
“The agency has received preliminary reports of an incident on Saturday evening at Jilli Saturday Market... which reportedly resulted in casualties affecting some traders from Geidam LGA, Yobe State,” it said.

SEMA said it had activated emergency response measures on the directive of Governor Mai Mala Buni and deployed assessment teams to the area.

It added that it was working with security agencies and health authorities to provide support to the victims.

Air Force orders probe into alleged civilian casualties after Borno airstrike

This came as the Nigerian Air Force ordered an investigation into the airstrike.



Spokesman of the service, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, said the Chief of Air Staff directed the immediate activation of the Civilian Harm Accident and Investigation Cell (CHAI-Cell) to conduct a fact-finding mission at the location.

Ejodame said the Air Force had taken note of reports alleging that an airstrike carried out on April 11, 2026, may have affected the market, resulting in civilian casualties.

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He stated that the service treats all reports of possible civilian harm with seriousness and empathy, noting that the protection of civilian lives remains central to its operations.

“In line with this commitment, the CAS has directed an immediate activation of the Civilian Harm Accident and Investigation Cell (CHAI-Cell) to proceed to the location on a fact-finding mission on the allegation,” he said.

The Air Force reaffirmed its commitment to professionalism, accountability and transparency, adding that it would work with relevant authorities and community representatives to establish the facts.

It also urged the public and the media to avoid speculation while the investigation is ongoing.

“The [Nigerian Air Force](#) reassures all citizens of its steadfast resolve to protect both national security and civilian lives, while ensuring that every credible concern is addressed with the diligence and seriousness it deserves,” the statement added.

Death toll from Jilli market air strike rises above 60 as Buratai defends operation

The death toll from the military air strike has risen to over 60, according to local sources.

Sources said additional bodies were recovered hours after the strike, pushing the casualty figure beyond an initial estimate of 50.

Dozens of injured victims were evacuated to Yobe Specialist Hospitals in Damaturu and Geidam in about 10 buses.

Former Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Buratai, described the air strike as a necessary military action targeting a known terrorist logistics base.

In a statement, Buratai said the operation was based on credible intelligence linking the Jilli market to activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province.

“The strike was a targeted military action based on credible intelligence. The public should understand the history of Jilli Market. It has long been a notorious terrorist logistics hub,” he said.

He said insurgents had used the weekly market to collect levies, procure supplies, and coordinate attacks, noting that troops had previously raided and shut down the market, including during the 2018 Operation Last Hold.

Buratai said it was regrettable that civilians were affected but attributed the situation to insurgents operating within civilian populations.

“It is deeply regrettable that innocent lives may have been caught in the strike, but the sole responsibility rests with the terrorists who deliberately embed themselves within civilian populations as human shields,” he said.

He urged residents of communities, including Geidam, Gubio, Damasak, and Ngamdu to avoid markets infiltrated by insurgents, warning that continued interaction could expose them to danger.

Buratai also called for public support for the armed forces, expressing confidence that sustained operations and civilian cooperation would lead to success against insurgents.

Zulum warns against aiding insurgents after Jilli airstrike

Borno State Governor, Babagana Umara Zulum, has warned residents against aiding, harbouring or providing logistical support to Boko Haram insurgents following recent military operations in the state.

In a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media, Dauda Iliya, the governor described Jilli market as a hub allegedly used by insurgents and their logistics suppliers.

“I have been properly briefed on the airstrike carried out by the Air Component of Operation Hadin Kai on Jilli market, a border town between Borno and Yobe states. Let me state categorically that the Borno State Government closed Jilli and Gazabure markets five years ago,” he said.

Zulum added that he is in consultation with the Yobe State Government and military authorities on the development.

He explained that the state government works closely with security agencies before resettling communities or reopening markets in areas affected by insurgency.

The governor reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to protecting residents and sustaining collaboration with security agencies to restore stability across the state.

He also urged residents to remain vigilant and support security agencies with credible information to aid ongoing operations.

Hashim raises alarm over 'underreported' killings across Nigeria

Relatedly, a former presidential candidate, Gbenga Hashim, has raised concerns over a fresh wave of killings across Nigeria, warning that many incidents remain underreported and are receiving limited global attention.

In a statement, Hashim said repeated attacks in Shanga Local Council of Kebbi State, as well as parts of the North-Central region and other areas, point to a persistent and widening security breakdown.

He stated that the scale of the violence is being underestimated and increasingly treated as routine. According to him, attacks in Shanga over the past week left more than 40 people dead, with several houses burnt, while local sources suggest the casualty figure may be higher.

Hashim noted that earlier incidents in the same community claimed seven lives, adding that residents have faced sustained attacks without adequate security response.

He described the situation as part of a broader pattern of mass killings in rural communities that fail to attract sustained national and international attention.

In Kwara State, he said coordinated attacks across Kaiama, Baruten and Ifelodun local councils have resulted in between 20 and 50 deaths in recent weeks, including five forest guards, with many incidents receiving limited coverage beyond local reports.

Afenifere raises alarm over coordinated attacks on troops, civilians

Also, the pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, Afenifere, has expressed concern over what it described as a pattern of coordinated killings and attacks on military formations across Nigeria.

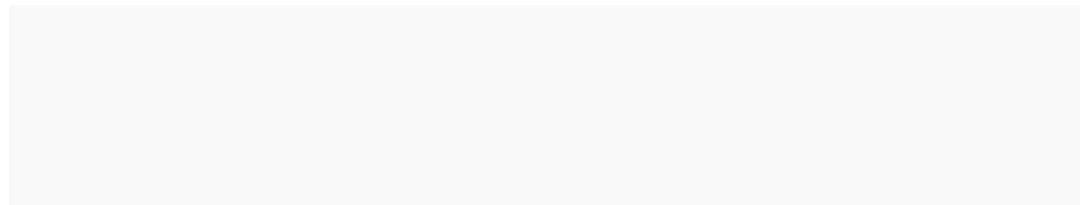
In a statement issued by its National Publicity Secretary, Jare Ajayi, the group said recent violence targeting both security personnel and civilians reflects a worsening security situation nationwide.

Afenifere cited the killing of soldiers during an attack on a military base in Benisheikh, Borno State, alongside reported assaults on military locations in Pulka and Monguno, as signs of increasing boldness among armed groups.

The organisation also highlighted attacks on civilians, including the killing of a poultry farmer and her daughter, and the abduction of workers at Igushi Ala in Akure North Local Council of Ondo State. It noted that similar incidents have occurred in Plateau, Kwara, Niger and Kaduna states.

According to the group, the near-simultaneous nature of the attacks across multiple regions indicates a coordinated pattern requiring urgent response from security agencies.

Afenifere linked the situation to internal sabotage within security formations, collaboration between bandits and local informants, and the activities of external interests targeting Nigeria's mineral resources.



The group called for a comprehensive review of internal security systems to identify and remove saboteurs.

Ajayi noted that armed groups often move in large convoys of motorcycles, making them visible and traceable, and urged the military to enhance the deployment of drones, CCTV and other surveillance tools to intercept such movements.

He added that the challenge lies in the use of available intelligence, stating that the ease of attack points to the presence of informants, protectors and sponsors within critical structures.