

Seven killed as Kaduna bandits, illegal miners clash

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File photo: Bandits

By Godwin Isenyo

At least seven persons were feared dead on Thursday following a clash between suspected bandits and a group of illegal miners in Kuyello Ward, Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Saturday PUNCH gathered that the incident, which occurred around 11am, threw the usually quiet community into panic as gunshots echoed across the area, forcing residents to flee into the surrounding bushes for safety.

Kuyello, located in the eastern part of Birnin Gwari, shares boundaries with Zamfara and Katsina states—areas notorious for banditry and illegal mining that have long undermined security in the region.

Residents who claimed to have witnessed the incident told Saturday PUNCH that the confrontation started after a suspected bandit demanded levies from illegal miners operating in the area, sparking a dispute that led to his death.

A community leader living close to the area of the incident said the slain bandit had arrived from neighbouring Zamfara State to extort money from the miners, but the encounter turned fatal.

Speaking with our correspondent on condition of anonymity because of security concern, the community leader said, “He came demanding payment from the miners as he always did, but this time they refused. An argument broke out and he was killed. They buried his body in a shallow grave.

“When his gang members heard of it, they stormed Kuyello in broad daylight, shooting indiscriminately. By the time it ended, seven people were dead, including some of the miners.”

The attack shattered the fragile calm the community had enjoyed for nearly a year after relative peace returned to parts of Birnin Gwari following the Kaduna State Government’s peacebuilding initiatives.

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A resident who fled Kuyello after the violence lamented that illegal mining had become a “curse” for the people of Birnin Gwari.

“We are pleading with the government to stop these illegal miners. They are the reason the bandits keep returning. Every time there is a fight over money or gold, innocent people suffer,” he said.

Similarly, another resident who is familiar with the incident said, “For some time now, there had been peace because of the reconciliation efforts of the government. But this incident has reopened old wounds. Many people have started leaving their homes again.”

Although the Kaduna State Police Command has yet to issue an official statement, a senior police officer confirmed to Saturday PUNCH that personnel had been deployed to the area to prevent further violence.

According to the police officer, some of the attackers were apprehended during a joint operation involving soldiers, police, and local vigilantes.

“The situation has been brought under control. Security teams are now stationed at the mining site and nearby villages. Some of the assailants from Zamfara have been arrested,” he said.

Efforts to reach the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mansir Hassan, were unsuccessful as calls and messages to his phone were not answered as of press time.

| Godwin Isenyo