

Gunmen kill 17 in Plateau, Kaduna

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File photo: Masked gunmen

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No fewer than 17 people have been killed in fresh attacks by gunmen across communities in Plateau and Kaduna states.

In Kaduna, seven people were confirmed dead and one other injured after gunmen invaded Damakasuwa community in Chawai Chiefdom, Kauru Local Government Area of the state.

Sunday PUNCH gathered that the assailants invaded the community around 8:00pm on Friday, shooting sporadically and forcing residents to flee into nearby bushes for safety.

The attack threw the entire community into panic as gunshots rent the air for several minutes without any immediate response from security personnel, according to some residents who spoke with our correspondents.

The Paramount Chief of Chawai, Alhaji Yahaya Muhammad, who confirmed the incident to Sunday PUNCH, said five persons were shot dead on the spot, while two others who were critically injured later died.

“The incident heightened tension in the area, but normalcy has since been restored due to the presence of military personnel in the community.

“We have urged our people to remain calm and allow the security agencies to carry out their duties diligently to ensure the perpetrators are apprehended,” he said.

A youth leader in the area, Barnabas Chawai, told our correspondent that the gunmen opened fire on villagers who were either retiring to bed or still engaged in evening activities.

“They came when people were going about their normal routines. While some had already gone to bed, six people were killed on the spot, and one person who sustained a gunshot wound to the throat was rushed to Jos for treatment,” Chawai said.

A former chieftain of the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union, who pleaded anonymity because he was not authorised to speak on the matter, also confirmed the incident to our correspondent.

“Yes, there was an attack yesterday in Southern Kaduna. That I can tell you. Thank you,” he said.



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As of press time, security agencies had yet to issue an official statement on the incident.

Residents, however, appealed to the Kaduna State Government and security operatives to intensify patrols and surveillance to prevent further attacks.

Efforts to get comments from the Kaduna State Police Command's spokesperson, Mansir Hassan, proved abortive, as calls and text messages sent to his phone were not returned.

Kauru Local Government Area, located in the southern part of Kaduna, has remained one of the most volatile areas in the state, with recurring incidents of armed banditry and communal violence claiming dozens of lives in recent years.

In Plateau State, 10 people were reportedly killed in separate attacks between Friday and Saturday.

Seven were confirmed dead in Kwi community, Riyom Local Government Area, while three others were killed in Pushit community, Mangu Local Government Area.

Confirming the incident to Sunday PUNCH, a community leader, Rwang Tengwon, said, "Kwi community was attacked on Friday by suspected Fulani militia, and seven persons were killed. One person was also killed on his farm Saturday afternoon, and another attack happened at night."

The Mwaghavul Development Association confirmed the Pushit attack in a statement signed by its Director of Public Affairs, Friday Derwan.

"We call upon security operatives in our local government area and Plateau State to rise to the challenge of curbing these unwarranted assaults on innocent lives," the statement read.

Spokesman for the Plateau State Police Command, Alabo Alfred, was not available when contacted on the incidents as his phone indicated it was switched off.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang had earlier announced restrictions on night grazing, cattle transportation after 7pm, and motorcycle movement between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. as part of efforts to curb insecurity across the state.