

Slain Adamawa women killed by militia, not soldiers – Army

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A burnt building during the clash. Photo: Army

Emmanuel Ande and Uthman Salami

The Headquarters 23 Brigade of the Nigerian Army has denied shooting any civilians during the recent communal clash in the Lamurde Local Government Area of Adamawa State, insisting that the two women found dead were killed as a result of militia members' mishandling their weapons.

The clarification followed reports alleging that soldiers escorting the Brigade Commander of 23 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Yola, shot and killed several women during the clash on Monday.

In a statement posted on its X handle on Tuesday, the Acting Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, Sector 4 Operation Hadin Kai/23 Brigade, Captain Olusegun Abidoeye, described the claims as “baseless and misleading,” stressing that “neither the Brigade Commander nor his escorts were at the scene of the communal clash.”

“The commander was participating virtually in the Chief of Army Staff’s weekly operational brief at the time of the alleged incident,” the statement added.

The Brigade explained that combined security forces, including troops of 23 Brigade, the Nigerian Police, NSCDC, and DSS, responded to violent clashes between the Bachama and Chobo tribes, resulting from longstanding land disputes and ethnic tensions.

He noted that troops were deployed to affected communities, including Tingno, Rigange, Tito, Waduku, and Lamurde, to restore calm.

Reiterating its position, the Brigade maintained, “It is necessary to inform the general public that neither the Brigade Commander nor his escorts were at the scene of the communal clash, as the Brigade Commander was participating virtually in the Chief of Army Staff’s weekly operational brief at the time of the purported shooting by his escorts.”

The statement added that troops received distress reports at about 1:35am on Monday and moved swiftly to restore order.

During the operation, the statement explained that a militia group suspected of supporting one of the warring sides reportedly attacked the troops.

“In response, soldiers neutralised three gunmen, and additional members of the militia were later found neutralised along their withdrawal route, along with a motorcycle,” the Brigade stated.

The army further explained that troops advanced to secure the Lamurde Local Government Secretariat after receiving reports of a possible attack. While some women were said to have initially blocked their passage, armed men allegedly opened fire indiscriminately.

“The Brigade clarified that no civilians were shot by Army personnel, and the two women later brought to the Local Government Lodge were reportedly killed due to the unprofessional handling of weapons by the militias,” the statement added.

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The Brigade expressed condolences to the families of the deceased and urged the communities involved to embrace peace to prevent further bloodshed.

It reaffirmed its commitment to performing its constitutional duties in aid of civil authorities and urged the public to disregard what it described as a “malicious report.”

Earlier, The PUNCH reported that the State Governor, Ahmadu Fintiri, had declared a 24-hour curfew in Lamurde Local Government Area on Monday following the bloody crisis between the communities.

Reacting to the incident, the Bwatiye Youth Wing, the umbrella body of the Bachama ethnic group, condemned what it described as unacceptable actions by some army personnel deployed on a peacekeeping mission in the area.

In a statement signed by its General Secretary, Abner Kwakano, the group accused the soldiers of using excessive force.

“It is important to remind the public that the Tsobo (Pire) launched their first coordinated attacks on Waduku and Rigange on July 7, 2025, leading to loss of lives, destruction of homes, and the burning of villages,” the statement read.

“Following this, the Adamawa State Government intervened, and negotiations toward a peaceful resolution were ongoing before this most recent and unprovoked strike.

“Despite these efforts toward peace, soldiers deployed to maintain calm opened fire on unarmed women protesting in Lamurde town, an area not directly involved in the communal crisis.

“This tragic action resulted in the death of no fewer than seven innocent women and left many others seriously injured.”

Kwakano described the conduct of the soldiers as unprofessional and unjustifiable.

“While we acknowledge and respect the Nigerian Army as an institution. The actions of those involved raise legitimate concerns about bias, excessive force, and a departure from peacekeeping standards,” the group added.