

# Kwara massacre: FG faces heat as 100 feared dead

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FILE: President Bola Tinubu

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Over 100 people were feared dead on Tuesday night following a deadly attack on Woro and Nuku communities in the Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State by Islamic militants, while several people were also killed after bandits pounced on Abande community in Mbaikyor Ward, Turan, Kwande LG of Benue State.

Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, however, confirmed the death of 75 persons.

The governor disclosed the figure on Wednesday night while addressing residents at the palace of the Emir of Kaiama, explaining that the victims were “local Muslims massacred for refusing to surrender to extremists

preaching a strange doctrine.”

He added that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had approved the immediate deployment of an Army battalion to the area to prosecute counter-offensives code-named Operation Savannah Shield.

Lakurawa, an armed group linked to the Islamic State Sahel Province, is believed to have carried out the attack. The latest development has further put the Federal Government’s security campaign under public scrutiny.

The lawmaker representing the area in the House of Representatives, Mohammed Bio, also confirmed the attack to The PUNCH on Wednesday night.

However, Bio said he was not sure of the fatality figures, citing the conflicting reports from the affected communities.

“There are conflicting reports about the killings. Some of the reports say about 100 people were killed, others say 100 plus, and others say about 160. We don’t have the correct report.

“These are reports coming from the communities, but we don’t have the exact figures. There are killings, but no one can ascertain the correct number. We are calling on the Federal Government to step in and assist us in protecting lives and property. The situation is quite devastating.”

Sources within the communities told The PUNCH that the death toll might be higher than officially acknowledged, with about 70 persons reportedly buried in a mass grave at Woro community on Wednesday afternoon.

Residents said the attackers had earlier moved around border villages in neighbouring Niger State, preaching that locals should abandon Nigeria’s constitution and embrace Islamic law.

One source said, “When they brought the same message to Woro and Nuku, some people challenged them. That angered the bandits, and they opened fire on the gathering, shooting indiscriminately.”

Another resident revealed that the group had earlier attempted to preach in the Baburasa community in Borgu area, but were rejected by the village head.

Some reports suggested the attackers operated from forests around the Borgu axis, with security analysts linking them to extremist elements suspected to be expanding sleeper operations in border communities.

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Meanwhile, survivors narrated their heartbreaking experiences. The head of Woro village, Alhaji Umar Tanko, told the Kaiama council chairman, Alhaji Abubakar Danladi, that he lost his daughter and two sons, while his junior wife and two others were abducted.

“I was in my shop when they arrived. They shot my children and took my second wife away,” he said.

Another resident, Razaq Abdulazeez, said he narrowly escaped with his family after seeing people running towards the outskirts of town.

“Those who couldn’t run climbed trees to avoid the attackers,” he added.

Reacting to the incident, the Speaker of the Kwara State House of Assembly, Yakubu Danladi-Saliu, called for intensified military action along the Niger border axis.

“I am calling for an escalation of operations to flush out these criminals. Communities must also cooperate fully with security agencies,” he said, while condoling the Emir of Kaiama and the families of the victims.

Also, the Senator representing Kwara Central, Saliu Mustapha, urged the deployment of more troops in the affected areas, describing the attack as a tragic reminder of the need for stronger vigilance and community cooperation.

The Kwara State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party also condemned the attack, calling it “despicable and inhuman,” and warned that insecurity in the state required more than sympathy messages.

“This incident shows that Kwara is far from overcoming banditry. What is needed is decisive and people-oriented leadership,” the party said in a statement.

The latest assault comes amid growing concerns over the spread of banditry and extremist violence across parts of north-central Nigeria, with rural communities increasingly becoming targets despite ongoing security operations.

Meanwhile, findings indicate that about 271 people have been killed, while 253 others were abducted in a series of terrorist attacks in the past four weeks across several states.

The attacks occurred in communities in Niger, Kaduna, Kwara, Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara states.

No fewer than 177 church worshippers were abducted in Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State earlier in the month.

Other affected areas include Kasuwan Daji Market in Niger State, where at least 60 people were killed; Damala village, where four residents were killed; and Doma community in Katsina State, where 20 people lost their lives.

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In addition to the 177 worshippers in Kajuru, four people were abducted in Tudun Bussa, Kaduna State, including a pastor and his three children, while six residents were kidnapped in Unguwar Barkonu in Maraban Kajuru.

Other abductions have occurred in Maraban Rido, Kikwari Village, and along highways in Kwara and Sokoto states.

Commenting on the massacre in Kwara, a former governor of the state, Bukola Saraki, condemned the incident, describing it as a national disaster.

The ex-Senate President, in a Facebook post, noted that the killings were beyond the capacity of the state government and now require decisive, direct federal intervention.

He wrote, “Yesterday’s killing of over 100 people in Woro community, Kaiama Local Government Area, is a national disaster. What we are witnessing in parts of Kwara State—particularly in the northern and southern senatorial districts—has gone beyond the capacity of the state government and now requires decisive, direct federal intervention.

“What we require now to stop this mass destruction of lives and properties in our state and to restore harmony is the decisive and direct intervention from President Tinubu. We call on the Commander-in-Chief to direct the General Officer Commanding of the Second Mechanised Infantry Division, Ibadan, to second his men to deploy into the troubled districts of Kwara State and to establish a base in the affected areas.

“There is also the need for other security agencies to work together and have a strong presence across our state. That is the only way we can deter these assailants.

“The insurgents who are running away from the firepower of the security agencies in other states in the North-Central zone should not be allowed to find a comfort zone in Kwara State.

“Kwara State is too strategic to this country that we should not allow insurgency to gain ground there. It is a state located in the middle of the country and serves as a bridge between the North and the Southwest. It also has an international border with the Republic of Benin and shares borders with many other states.”

He consoled the Woro community, particularly the families that lost their loved ones.

“May Almighty Allah comfort them and grant them the strength and fortitude to bear the loss. Also, may He heal all the wounded.

“However, we should not limit our reaction to this sad development to mere press comments. We should ensure that this violence against our people does not happen again anywhere in Kwara State,” he noted.

Saraki admonished the federal and state governments, as well as the councils, to play their parts in protecting lives and property.

“Kwara State has not always been this unsafe. The state has always been a peaceful place, and that is why it earned the sobriquet ‘State of Harmony’. Unfortunately, things have gone this badly.

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“The level of killings, arson, and displacement of people that we are witnessing now is unprecedented.

There must be decisive measures to stop this orchestrated violence against the people. It is an unfortunate situation. This attack in Woro is a national emergency.

“What these criminals did in Woro was to wage war against Nigeria. It is a war the country must win, without delay. May Almighty Allah (SWT) give our country victory over these non-state actors.”

## Opposition react

The New Nigeria People’s Party condemned the renewed killings in parts of Kwara and Katsina States, describing the attacks as unfortunate and avoidable, while urging the Federal Government to urgently overhaul the nation’s security architecture.

Reacting to the incidents, the National Publicity Secretary of the NNPP, Ladipo Johnson, expressed sympathy with the families of those affected and called for national unity in tackling banditry and insurgency.

He said, “It is very unfortunate. First, NNPP commiserate with the families of those who passed away, were murdered or wounded. We pray that within a short time, those who are currently unaccounted for will be found and returned to their families at home.

“These killings and continued insecurity should not be used as a political tool. We must all come together as one to fight this banditry and insurgency.

“However, we must state that we are very disappointed in the gross incompetence of this government in ensuring the safety of the lives and property of Nigerians as enshrined in the constitution.

“We urge the government to go back to the drawing board and look at the security architecture and adjust the budgets where necessary for the defence and security agencies to ensure we concentrate on the areas that will help us. If we need drone technology to safeguard this country, let us do that. These bandits are just coming and rushing out. They need to bring Niger and Chad to the table too.”

The Peoples Democratic Party in Kwara State has criticised the response of Governor Abdulrahman AbdulRazaq to the recent bandit attack on Woro and Nuku towns in Kaiama Local Government Area of the state.

In a statement issued in Ilorin on Wednesday by the party’s State Publicity Secretary, Olusegun Adewara, the opposition described the governor’s comment on the incident as merely cosmetic and lacking hope or concrete reassurance for wounded victims and affected communities.

Reacting, the PDP condemned the attack, describing it as “gruesome, despicable, inhuman and callous.”

“A former students’ union president of a tertiary institution in Kwara State was among those brutally killed. This is a wicked act that no human should ever inflict on fellow human beings,” the party said.

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According to the opposition party, Kwara State required far more than “propaganda, photo-ops and hollow sympathy messages” to defeat insurgency and banditry.

“This incident is yet another reminder that what Kwara urgently needs is decisive, practical and people-oriented leadership,” the statement read.

“Our party views the official communication issued by Governor Abdulrahman AbdulRazaq as merely cosmetic and completely lacking hope or concrete reassurance for the wounded victims and the devastated communities,” Adewara said.

“A responsive government would have ordered the immediate deployment of humanitarian relief and medical emergency services to assist the victims and help the communities cope with this painful tragedy,” the statement added.

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The PDP also accused the governor of painting a distorted picture of the security situation in the state.

“Unfortunately, the governor’s statement is riddled with self-adulation and a misleading portrayal of security in Kwara State,” the party said, insisting that insecurity remained widespread.

“As of press time, citizens are still being kidnapped and villages continue to suffer attacks, despite repeated claims that insurgents are being decimated,” the party added.

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The PDP called on the state government to immediately deploy humanitarian aid, relief materials and medical support to the Woro and Nuku communities and other affected victims.

### **Soldiers, forest guards**

Meanwhile, military personnel and Forest Guards have taken over both villages, credible sources in the LG confirmed to The PUNCH on Wednesday morning.

“Soldiers and forest guards have taken over the two communities. It is a very sad development, especially at a time we thought we were enjoying peace from past bandit attacks,” she said.

It was further gathered that the bandits had been going around neighbouring villages in Niger State, preaching the same message, before infiltrating the affected communities in Kaiama Local Government Area.

Meanwhile, the state government, through a statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Rafiu Ajakaye, confirmed the bandit attack.

Ajakaye said Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq mourned the victims of the attack, noting that security forces had continued to improve on counterterrorism operations.

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“Kwara State Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq is saddened by the cowardly attack on civilians in the Woro and Nuku communities of Kaiama Local Government Area.

“The Governor condemns the attack, describing it as a cowardly expression of frustration by terrorist cells following ongoing counterterrorism campaigns in parts of the state and the successes so far recorded.

“Governor AbdulRazaq says the attack was apparently intended to distract security forces who have successfully hunted down several terrorist and kidnapping gangs across many parts of the state.

“The Governor expresses heartfelt condolences to the Woro and Nuku communities over the sad incident, especially the families affected by Tuesday’s attack,” he said.

The Nigerian Army had earlier deployed troops, including units from Operation Fansan Yamma and Operation Whirl Stroke, to intensify security in Kwara State.

The deployments focused on forest and rural areas prone to bandit and extremist infiltration, with objectives to arrest suspects, rescue kidnapped victims, recover weapons, and dismantle criminal nexus networks before they establish new bases.

## Benue attack

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Also in Benue, several people, including a mobile police officer, were killed on Tuesday when suspected bandits attacked Abande community in Mbaikyor Ward, Turan, Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State.

The attack occurred on a market day in the border community near Cameroon, triggering panic as residents fled after assailants opened fire, looted stalls and set parts of the market ablaze.

Casualty figures remained contested. A former councillor, Akerigbe Lawrence, claimed about 17 people, including a police officer, were killed. However, the Ter Kwande, His Royal Majesty Timothy Ayile, said six community members and one policeman died. The Benue State Police Command confirmed five fatalities, including a police officer.

Speaking on Wednesday, the traditional ruler said armed Fulani bandits attacked the community, where a police post manned by four officers was stationed.

“Six of my people and a policeman were killed, and their bodies were recovered Tuesday night. The other three policemen fled, leaving the area exposed,” Ayile said, while appealing to the Federal Government to establish a permanent military presence in Abande due to its difficult terrain and lack of communication network.

Confirming the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Udeme Edet, said the Divisional Police Officer in Jato-Aka received a distress call around 5:30pm on Tuesday about a large-scale attack on the police post and residents.

During the response, an Assistant Superintendent of Police attached to the 13 Police Mobile Force, Makurdi, who was on special duty in the community, was fatally injured.

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“Regrettably, four members of the community also lost their lives,” Edet said, adding that joint security teams had been deployed to secure the area, recover bodies and forestall further attacks.

The Commissioner of Police, Ifeanyi Emenari, has ordered the deployment of additional mobile police personnel and armoured personnel carriers to intensify operations and track the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, Governor Hyacinth Alia condemned the attack, describing it as “an assault on our shared humanity.”

In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Kula Terso, the governor said the killing of civilians and a police officer was a cowardly act and vowed that the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

“My heart goes out to the peaceful people of Abande. This government will not relent in its duty to protect lives and property,” Alia said, directing security agencies to intensify operations and restore safety to affected communities.

He extended condolences to the families of the victims and urged residents to remain united and resilient.

Kwande Local Government Area has witnessed repeated attacks in recent years. Abande is close to Anwase, where over 28 people were killed on Christmas Day in 2024. In January this year, a farmer and his son were killed in the area, while two security operatives were previously ambushed and killed during peacekeeping operations.

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### **Katsina military base**

In a related move, the Senate on Wednesday expressed deep concern over the worsening security situation in Katsina State, particularly in the Funtua Zone, following fresh bandit attacks that reportedly claimed no fewer than 35 lives within 24 hours across three local government areas.

The development came as lawmakers urged President Bola Tinubu to urgently fulfil his pledge to establish a military barracks in the area, while cautioning against any form of negotiation with armed groups terrorising rural communities.

The matter was raised through a motion of urgent public importance under Order 42, sponsored by Senator Dandutse Mohammed, who represents Katsina South, calling for immediate and comprehensive federal intervention to halt the escalating violence.

Ruling on the motion, the President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, admitted it for debate after it received overwhelming support from senators.

Moving the motion, Dandutse said Katsina had been thrown into mourning by a renewed wave of coordinated attacks, including an ambush on personnel of the Mobile Police Force in Guga, Bako Local Government Area of Katsina metropolis, where three policemen were killed and two others critically injured.

He further disclosed that as of Tuesday, at least 35 persons had been killed in attacks across the Funtua Zone within a span of less than 24 hours.

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According to him, 24 persons were killed in Faskari Local Government Area, eight in Bakori, two in Funtua Local Government Area and one in Kankara Local Government Area.

The lawmaker warned that the persistent violence had forced more than 50,000 farmlands to remain uncultivated, posing a serious threat to food security, agricultural productivity and the livelihoods of residents in the largely agrarian zone.

He said, “The continuous bandit attacks on communities will significantly affect food production and agricultural activities, as more than 50,000 farmlands are presently inaccessible, thereby jeopardising food security and the livelihoods of the people.

“The Governor of Katsina State led a delegation of elders from Funtua Zone where issues of insecurity were raised, and Mr President pledged to site a military barracks in the area.

“I urge President Bola Tinubu and the security agencies to ensure rapid and sustained intervention until all criminal elements are eliminated. I also urge him to fulfil his pledge to establish a new military barracks in the Funtua Zone.”

Following the debate, the Senate resolved to urge President Tinubu to fulfil his pledge to establish a military barracks in the Funtua Zone; direct the Inspector-General of Police to equip the newly established police squadron in the area with at least three Armoured Personnel Carriers; and call on the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and the National Emergency Management Agency to provide immediate relief to affected families and communities.

Seconding the motion, the Deputy Senate President, Senator Jibrin Barau, said the Federal Government had already directed the military to intensify operations in Katsina, particularly in the Funtua axis.

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## **Ebonyi clash**

The Nigerian Army has dismissed reports circulating on social media that two soldiers were killed and a military patrol vehicle burnt in Oso Edda community, Edda Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

The clarification followed allegations linked to a recent attack by assailants from the Amasiri clan on Okporojo village in Oso Edda community, where more than four residents were reportedly killed and beheaded.

Addressing journalists on Wednesday in Abakaliki, the Cantonment Commander of Nkwagu Military Barracks, Lt. Col. Emmanuel Chielo, described the reports as false and misleading.

“None of my men have been killed,” Chielo said, explaining that the ongoing operation in Amasiri was a joint security effort involving the police, the Department of State Services and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence

Corps.

He said troops came under attack on the first day of deployment but responded professionally, exercising restraint due to the residential nature of the area.

“If we had acted out of anger that night, it would have been bloody. We acted professionally, and no soldier was killed,” he said.

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The army commander assured residents that security agencies would work to recover the severed heads of the victims beheaded during the attack on Okporojo village, describing the act as inhuman and deeply troubling.

“It is painful that people of the same ancestry could treat one another this way. Issues like ancestral land disputes and chieftaincy struggles often underlie such violence,” he noted.

Chielo said sustained security efforts had helped keep Ebonyi relatively peaceful, describing the state as currently the most peaceful in the South-East.

He also defended the decision of the State Security Council, approved by the Ebonyi State Government, saying it was necessary to prevent reprisals and restore calm.

“If people decide to retaliate, no one would blame them. That is what we are trying to prevent,” he said.

The officer further warned about the growing movement of small arms across states, calling it a major security threat.

*“People may look like they are going to the farm, but they are transporting weapons. Security should not be left to government alone,” he added.*