

# Night of terror in Zamfara

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Zamfara State was on Friday thrown into mourning as bandits reportedly killed no fewer than 50 residents of Dutsin Dan Ajiya village, Anka Local Government area of the state.

Corpses of the victims were robed in white in preparation for a mass burial as seen in a video by Saturday PUNCH.

A resident of the village, who spoke on condition of anonymity, disclosed that the bandits, who carried sophisticated weapons, raided the village on Thursday night and shot sporadically.

He added that the terrorists blocked all access roads linking the community to prevent people from running away.

He said, “After blocking all the roads, the bandits started to shoot at sight and the villagers ran helter-skelter.

“After the attack, we realised that 30 people were killed; some were wounded, while several others are at large and nobody knows their whereabouts.”

Saturday PUNCH gathered that the attackers also abducted many residents during the raid which lasted till the wee hours of Friday.

However, *Reuters* said at least 50 people were killed in the attack.

A lawmaker representing Bukkuyum South, Hamisu Faru, told the news agency that the attackers raided the village from around 5pm on Thursday until about 3.30am on Friday, burning down buildings and shooting residents who tried to flee.

“They have been moving from one village to another ... leaving at least 50 people dead,” Faru added.

A 41-year-old resident of the village, Abdullahi Sani, also said three family members were killed in the attack.

He said, “No one slept yesterday, we are all in pain.”

According to Sani, residents alerted security forces and local authorities when they saw more than 150 motorcycles carrying the hoodlums, but they got no support.

The state police spokesperson, Yazid Abubakar, could not be reached for comment.

He did not take his calls and had yet to respond to a text message sent to him as of press time.

Also, an aide to the governor promised to get back to Saturday PUNCH on the incident.

He had yet to do so as of the time of filing this report.

The attack came a day after the Zamfara State Government donated Armoured Personnel Carriers and a drone to security personnel to fight against banditry.

The Minister of Defence, Gen Christopher Musa (rtd), who received the donation, had urged troops of the Nigerian Army to take decisive measures against any bandit or terrorist who failed to surrender or lay down their arms during the operation.

Zamfara is part of the North-West states being ravaged by banditry despite sustained military onslaught.

On Wednesday, no fewer than 33 residents of Bui District in Arewa LGA of Kebbi State were killed by Lakurawa terrorists in a reported attempt to rustle cattle.

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Similarly, the Lakurawa terrorists attacked the Maganho community in Tangaza LGA of Sokoto State, killing five persons on February 13, 2026

The attackers also rustled a large number of livestock belonging to residents, most of whom are farmers.

In Katsina, the bandits killed 21 residents in Doma town, Faskari LGA on February 3.

The attack shattered a six-month non-aggression pact the community had earlier reached with the gunmen.

### **‘Killings not a resurgence’**

Reacting to the tragedy, the Executive Director of the Foundation for Peace Professionals, Abdulrazaq Hamzat, dismissed the notion that the latest killings represent a resurgence of violence.

Speaking with Saturday PUNCH on Friday, Hamzat characterised the situation as a grim continuation of a long-standing security deficit.

He said the nation’s security architecture was fundamentally flawed and trapped “in a cycle of reactive measures rather than proactive prevention.”

“I do not think it is a resurgence; it is just the continuation of existing insecurity,” he stated.

Hamzat observed that the federal security apparatus was spread too thin to provide sustainable protection across the country’s vast territory.

He noted that the current strategy often involves moving troops from one crisis point to another, leaving recovered areas vulnerable once the military presence is withdrawn.

“Our security approach has always been about responding to situations as they happen. The security has been overstretched, before they effectively complete an operation in one location, they’re deployed to other places with more pressing demands,” said.

As a lasting solution to the carnage, the PeacePro boss maintained that the decentralisation of the police force is no longer a matter of debate but a necessity for national survival.

He insisted that the establishment of state and local police is the only viable option to provide the granular level of security needed to deter bandits in remote areas.

According to him, without a permanent, localised security presence that understands the terrain and maintains a constant vigil, the cycle of killings in states like Kebbi and Zamfara will continue to defy the efforts of a centralised, over-burdened federal command.

Similarly, a security expert, Akin Adeyi, suggested that the government and the military should commence offensive attacks on the bandits.

He said the government should have prepared for the fallout of the December 25, 2025 US strike on the bandits, which he said was responsible for attacks in new areas.

Adeyi said, “It is terrible that we are having this kind of situation, and that we are not prepared for it is a minus for the government. I said with the way the US struck on December 25 last year, these people (bandits) will run helter-skelter, and start spreading into places where there was peace, launching uncoordinated attacks. That is what they will be doing now.

“The government is supposed to have engaged the civil defence, the mobile police and all other paramilitary fully. The moment they are scattered and running into safety, they should have had a plan to curtail them to stop them from entering into society.

“It is not that they (security forces) will just go and sit and rely on repelling attacks. No, it is time for them to be on the offensive now. Anywhere, anytime they gather or receive information about their decision, let them not wait until they attack.”