

Security forces kill five bandits, rescue 32 kidnap victims in Katsina

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File photo: Katsina State map

By Esha Aliku

Intensified joint security operations against banditry in Katsina State have resulted in the killing of five suspected bandits and the rescue of 32 kidnapped victims.

The state Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Dr. Nasir Mu'azu, disclosed this in a statement made available to newsmen in Katsina.

Mu'azu said the operations targeted a notorious bandit leader identified as Muhammad Fulani, who is said to be operating across Matazu, Musawa, Kankia and Charanchi local government areas of Katsina and parts of Kano State.

According to the statement, security forces neutralised five bandits and recovered operational weapons and equipment during the operations.

The recovered weapons include one AK47 rifle, 10 magazines and nine motorcycles used by the criminal gang.

Notable among those eliminated was Samagi, described as a close ally of notorious bandit leader Muhammadu Kachalla.

The statement read, "Katsina State Government has recorded another successful security operation against bandit activities in the state and the neighbouring communities.

“The Joint security forces have intensified operations targeting Muhammad Fulani, a notorious bandit leader operating across Matazu, Musawa, Kankia Charanchi, and parts of Kano State.

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“In recent operations, security forces neutralised five bandits and recovered operational weapons and equipment. The recovered items include one AK47 rifle, 10 magazines, and nine motorcycles used by the criminal gang.

“Notable among the eliminated bandits is Samagi, a close ally of Muhammadu Kachalla. The operations resulted in the rescue of 32 victims comprising 10 women, 9 men, and 13 children who were being held by the bandits.

“It is expedient to emphasise that the state government under Governor Malam Dikko Umaru Radda has made its position very clear not to contemplate negotiating with bandits. The governor has continuously emphasized that the administration is committed to eliminating banditry at all costs and bringing criminal activities to the absolute minimum.

“Similarly, the operations targeting Muhammad Fulani remain ongoing. Security forces continue the manhunt across all affected areas with determination and focus. Citizens are encouraged to provide intelligence to security agencies to support ongoing operations against criminal elements.”

Katsina has been one of the epicentres of the banditry crisis that has ravaged Nigeria’s North-West region over the past decade.

Armed gangs operating across vast swathes of forest reserves and rural communities have carried out mass kidnappings, cattle rustling, village raids and killings, displacing hundreds of thousands of residents and grinding agricultural activities to a near halt in several local government areas.

The crisis, which shares characteristics with but is distinct from the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, has its roots in a complex interplay of factors including poverty, unemployment, proliferation of small arms, the collapse of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms between farming and herding communities, and the weakening of state presence in remote areas.