

Terrorists strike three Oyo schools

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A file photo of bandits

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There was panic in Oyo State on Friday following a coordinated attack on three schools in Orire Local Government Area, as armed terrorists killed an assistant headmaster, abducted many pupils and teachers, and threw entire communities into chaos.

The affected schools were Baptist Nursery and Primary School, Yawota; Community Grammar School, Esiele; and L.A. Primary School.

Residents described the attack as one of the most daring assaults on school communities in recent times, with gunmen reportedly operating in broad daylight and moving freely between locations without resistance.

The incident, which occurred in the early hours of Friday, left parents, teachers and residents in distress as security operatives launched a manhunt for the kidnappers.

Eyewitnesses said the hoodlums stormed the communities around 9am, shortly after pupils gathered for morning assembly and normal school activities resumed.

According to multiple residents, the assailants arrived on motorcycles and shot sporadically as they entered school premises and nearby areas.

The attackers were said to have operated in a coordinated manner, striking more than one school almost simultaneously.

A resident explained that the schools were raided in quick succession, which forced pupils and teachers to flee into nearby bushes for safety.

“They came in large numbers on motorcycles and started shooting immediately. Everybody ran. They moved from one school to another within minutes,” the source said.

Teacher, motorcyclist killed

The Assistant Headmaster of L.A. Primary School, Joel Adesiyan, was killed during the incident.

Witnesses said he was trying to escape through a window when he was shot dead.

His death has since sparked grief within the education community in the area, with colleagues describing him as dedicated and committed to his duties.

In a separate incident during the chaos, an okada rider who unknowingly rode into the scene of the attack was also killed after he was caught in the crossfire.

The attackers abducted the principal of Community Grammar School, Mrs Rachael Alamu, alongside five teachers and an unspecified number of pupils.

Sources within the community said the terrorists moved quickly between classrooms.

One resident said, “The assistant head teacher was trying to escape through the window, but he was shot dead. The principal and five teachers were kidnapped. They also took several pupils.”

The exact number of abducted pupils remains unclear as of the time of filing this report.

However, residents fear the figure could be significant, especially from the secondary school.

Principal’s vehicle used, later burnt

Saturday PUNCH gathered that the terrorists used the principal’s vehicle to transport some of the abducted victims out of the community.

The vehicle was said to have later developed a mechanical fault while the assailants attempted to escape through difficult terrain.

A resident said, “The schools are very close to each other, so the attack affected both at the same time. They used the principal’s car to move some of the abducted victims, but when the vehicle could not continue, they abandoned it and set it ablaze.”

The burning of the vehicle further intensified panic, with residents fleeing their homes for fear of a second wave of attacks.

Traditional ruler describes chaos

The traditional ruler of the community, the Eleshi Ele of Esiele, Oba Tajudeen Abioye, confirmed that the terrorists arrived on eight motorcycles, each carrying two armed men.

He said the attack began while a town meeting was ongoing.

“We were having a town hall meeting when we suddenly heard gunshots. People started running in all directions. Later, we discovered they had attacked the schools, killed a teacher and abducted pupils and the principal,” he said.

The monarch added that even kindergarten pupils were not spared in the attack.

“They did not spare anyone. They abducted pupils from both primary and secondary schools, including very small children. We cannot even confirm the number yet,” he said.

Oba Adeoye confirmed the killing of the motorcyclist who unknowingly encountered the attackers.

According to him, the hoodlums seized the man’s motorcycle and used it during their operation.

Oba Abioye lamented that the absence of a nearby police station contributed to the scale of destruction.

He said it took security operatives nearly two hours to arrive after the attack had already been carried out.

“The police station is far from our community. It took them about two hours before they arrived,” he said.

His comments reflect growing concerns about security gaps in rural communities across Nigeria, where many settlements remain far from formal security presence.

Forest escape, military pursuit

Following the attack, the assailants reportedly fled into a nearby forest reserve bordering Oriire communities and Old Oyo National Park axis.

Security agencies, including the police and military, have since launched a coordinated search-and-rescue operation.

The Oyo State Commissioner of Police, Ayodeji Abimbola, was said to have led a team of tactical officers to the area shortly after the incident.

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Military personnel were also deployed to comb the forest in search of the abductors and rescue victims.

As of Friday night, security forces were still combing the forested areas believed to be the escape route of the attackers.

Community fears fresh attack

Residents described the aftermath as chaotic, with many families fleeing their homes.

Some members of the community claimed that the number of deployed security personnel in the area exceeded the population of remaining residents.

Despite this, fear persists, as many parents remain uncertain about the whereabouts of their children.

The Chairman of Oriire Local Government Area, Michael Olateju, said the terrorists entered through the Yawota axis.

He described the terrain as difficult and remote, which made rapid security response challenging.

“They entered through Yawota. The area is far from the nearest police station. It is not easy to access quickly,” Olateju said.

He also confirmed that the attackers were armed and operated in coordinated units.

A former lawmaker representing Oriire Constituency, Bamigboye Abidoye, said the attackers exploited the proximity of the communities to forest reserves.

He said, “The bandits attacked the schools on motorcycles. They moved quickly between communities and abducted pupils and teachers. We need a military post around these areas.”

Abidoye added that the attackers forced victims into vehicles and later abandoned and burnt them when movement became difficult.

My niece missing – Relative

One of the relatives of the missing students, who did not identify himself, told Saturday PUNCH that his 16-year-old niece, a JSS2 student, had remained unaccounted for since she left home for school on the morning of the incident.

He said the family had been thrown into confusion and anxiety over her whereabouts, adding that they were unsure whether she was among those abducted or if something else had happened to her.

He said, “She left home for school around 7am, and we have not seen her since then. We have searched everywhere, but we are not sure if she is among the kidnapped victims or if she ran away. She is the daughter of my sister, and the whole family is worried.”

Government shuts schools

The Oyo State Universal Basic Education Board described the incident as “a dark and painful moment” for the education sector.

As a precaution, it ordered the temporary closure of schools in Oriire and surrounding local government areas, including Surulere, Oyo East and Olorunsogo.

Authorities said the measure was taken to prevent further attacks and allow security agencies to stabilise the region.

The Oyo State Police Command confirmed the killing of the Assistant Headmaster and the motorcyclist.

However, it stated that no pupil had been officially confirmed killed as of the time of filing this report.

The police also said abducted victims included both pupils and staff members.

Borno school attack

In a separate incident, gunmen reportedly attacked a school in Mussa community, near the Sambisa Forest in Borno State, on Friday morning.

The Deputy Speaker of the Borno State House of Assembly, Abdullahi Askira, confirmed the attack but said details were unclear.

“Details of the attack are sketchy, but the information at my disposal is that many of the students fled into the bush. However, I do not have details of those abducted,” he said in an interview with Saturday PUNCH.

Askira described the incident as disheartening, noting that the insurgents struck shortly after troops on patrol left the community.

Similarly, the President of the Borno South Youth Alliance, Samaila Kaigama, said the attackers stormed the school without resistance and took away an unspecified number of pupils.

He said, “They came this morning (Friday) and took away some children, though the number is yet to be specified. I was reliably informed that the abductors are the same faction that carried out the Ngoshe kidnapping.”

Kaigama added that the victims were pupils of a day school and not boarders.

“They came this morning and picked some primary school pupils. They attacked without any resistance. It happened around 9 am today,” he stated.

When contacted, the spokesperson for the Borno State Police Command, Nahum Daso, said the command had yet to receive full details of the incident.

“As of now, I have not received any information. We are still carrying out verification,” he said.

Efforts to reach the Chairman of Askira/Uba Local Government Area, Madu Saidu, were unsuccessful as calls to his line were not answered.

The Oyo and Borno incidents add to the country’s long list of school kidnappings in recent years, particularly in the North and North-Central regions.

From Chibok in 2014 to recent attacks in Niger and Kebbi States, schools have remained frequent targets for armed groups, raising concerns over student safety and rural security infrastructure.