

Jihadists execute 162 in Kwara massacre — Red Cross



...175 victims given mass burial
...Tinubu orders deployment of troops to state
...17 killed in Benue market attack by herders

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No fewer than 162 people have been killed in a deadly attack on Woro village in Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State, on Tuesday, in what has been described as the deadliest armed assault in the state this year.

A Red Cross official and local authorities confirmed the figure, while residents recounted harrowing details of mass executions and arson carried out by the attackers.

The Secretary of the Kwara State chapter of the Red Cross, Babaomo Ayodeji, said the confirmed death toll stood at 162 as of Wednesday afternoon. A local politician told Reuters that the figure could be as high as 170.

Sa'idu Ahmed, a politician from the Kaiama axis, told Reuters that the attackers rounded up villagers, tied their hands behind their backs and executed them. He added that homes and shops were also set ablaze during the assault.

"I am in the village along with military personnel, sorting dead bodies and searching nearby areas," Ahmed said.

He disclosed that many villagers fled into surrounding bushes with gunshot wounds, while several residents, including the village's traditional ruler, were still missing as of Wednesday.

Residents alleged that the attackers were jihadists who had previously preached in the community, demanding that villagers renounce allegiance to the Nigerian state in favour of Sharia law. According to them, the gunmen opened fire during a sermon after residents resisted their demands.

75 victims given mass burial

Meanwhile, at least 75 victims of the attack were given a mass burial on Wednesday at Woro community.

A government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Vanguard that although rumours suggested the death toll exceeded 150, "75 victims were given mass burial this afternoon (Wednesday)."

The Chairman of Kaiama Local Government Area, Abubakar Danladi, led an official delegation to the affected communities during the burial.

Survivors recount ordeal

One of the survivors and village head of Woro, Umar Tanko, said he was away when the attackers struck but lost members of his family in the violence.

He said “I was away at my shop where I sell goods when an army of bandits arrived at my residence on Tuesday evening. My daughter and two sons were shot dead, while my second wife and two others were abducted.”

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Another survivor, Razaq Abdulazeez, who lives on the outskirts of the town, said he narrowly escaped with his family, saying “I was returning home from work when I saw many people running towards the outskirts of the town. I asked what happened and was told they were escaping the wrath of bandits who had come to attack the community.

“I rushed to my house, packed my family members, and we escaped into the deep bush on the outskirts of the town. Many people who could not run out of town climbed trees to avoid the bandits' attack.”

Nursing student, brother among victims

Among those killed was Salihu Bio Khalid, a student of the Kwara State College of Nursing Sciences, KWASCONS.

The deceased was a midwifery student and former President of the Student Union Government, SUG, and was reportedly killed alongside his brother.

Also, the National Association of Nigeria Comrades, NANC, Kwara Axis, described the incident as devastating, calling for strengthened security, a thorough investigation and justice for the victims.

Confirming the attack, the Kwara State Government, in a statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Rafiu Ajakaye, said Governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq mourned the victims, describing the assault as a cowardly act and a sign of frustration by terrorist cells following sustained counterterrorism operations in the state

Also reacting, the Speaker of the Kwara State House of Assembly, Yakubu Danladi-Saliu, and the senator representing Kwara Central, Senator Saliu Mustapha, called for intensified military action and the deployment of more troops to the affected communities.

The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, in Kwara State condemned the attack and urged the state government to deploy humanitarian aid, while calling on security agencies to ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Deployment of troops

In his response, President Bola Tinubu has directed immediate deployment of troops to the state to arrest the worsening security.

Though detail of the President's directive was sketchy at the time of this report, he reportedly gave the order late yesterday evening.

17 killed in Benue market attack by herders

In a related development, at least 17 persons, including a Mobile Police officer, were killed on Tuesday following an attack by suspected armed herdsmen on Abande settlement in Mbaikyor Ward, Turan District of Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State.

The attack occurred at the Abande market while traders and buyers were conducting business. Witnesses said the assailants stormed the market, opened fire on civilians, looted shops and set parts of the market ablaze.

A community leader and former supervisory councillor in Kwande LGA, Lawrence Akerigba, said the attackers carted away millions of naira from traders before torching the market.

“Yesterday, (Tuesday) was Abande market day. People were buying and selling when the herders attacked. They looted shops, took away large sums of money and later set the market on fire,” he said.

“As of 11:55pm, some of the victims’ bodies were conveyed to Jato-Aka by personnel of the Mobile Police Force stationed in the area. A Mobile Police officer, said to be the unit commander on duty at the time, was also killed,” Akerigba added.

He lamented that the attack had forced residents to flee their homes and described the security situation in Turan as worsening.

“Since the beginning of this year, our people have been attacked almost daily. More than 76 people, including security officers, have been killed,” he said, questioning the enforcement of the Benue Open Grazing Prohibition Law and the absence of visible government presence in the border communities.

Police, Gov react

The Benue State Police Command confirmed the attack but gave a lower casualty figure. In a statement signed by its spokesperson, DSP Udeme Edet, the police said one Mobile Police officer and four community members were killed.

“During the ensuing confrontation while police operatives were responding to a distress call, one Assistant Superintendent of Police attached to 13 Police Mobile Force, Makurdi, was fatally injured,” the statement said.

The police added that combined security teams had been deployed to restore order, while the Commissioner of Police, Ifeanyi Emenari, ordered the deployment of additional Mobile Force personnel and Armoured Personnel Carriers to the area.

Governor Hyacinth Alia condemned the attack, describing it as a “cowardly act of terror.”

“My heart goes out to the peaceful people of Abande. This cowardly act of terror, which claimed innocent lives, including a gallant police officer, is an assault on our shared humanity,” the governor said.

He added: “I have directed relevant security agencies to intensify operations, go after the perpetrators with all the energies at their disposal, and restore safety to our communities.”

PDP, lawmaker raise alarm

The PDP in Benue State described the attack as “gruesome and barbaric,” accusing armed herdsmen and alleging government failure to protect lives and property.

“Credible reports indicate that no fewer than 17 persons were brutally killed,” the party said, urging security agencies to decisively apprehend and prosecute the perpetrators.

Also reacting, the lawmaker representing Kwande/Ushongo Federal Constituency, Terseer Ugbor, linked the escalating violence to illegal mining activities in the area.

“This is one killing too many. Kwande LGA has become a hub for the illegal mining of gold, lithium, iron ore, and other minerals. If this is not urgently addressed, the border areas of Benue, Taraba and Cameroon will become a major security flashpoint,” he warned.