

GWOZA LGA: REPEATED ATTACKS ON VILLAGES

In May and June 2014, Boko Haram attacked Chinene, Halagwa, Ganjara, Agapalwa, Angurva and Attagara villages in Gwoza LGA. Boko Haram fighters killed at least 200 people and burned down houses. Amnesty International interviewed six eyewitnesses to the attacks.

On 25 May 2014, Boko Haram attacked Chinene village. Days before the attack, Boko Haram fighters verbally warned members of the community of an imminent attack and, as nearby communities had been attacked after receiving warnings, they decided to send a delegation to inform the nearest military presence at Wihze (also known as Marabam Pulka).

Chris Maka (not real name), a 56-year-old pastor of several villages in Gwoza LGA, was part of the delegation. He told Amnesty International that the delegation waited all day to meet the commander and in the evening they asked to stay overnight. "The soldiers refused. They asked us to leave, the commander said they [Boko Haram] will start shooting very soon and may mistakenly shoot and kill us." As the delegation left the army base, they could see the fire in Chinene village. The soldiers did not go to Chinene but stayed in their base.¹⁰⁶ Chris Maka and the other men slept that night in the bush and the next morning he returned to his home village of Attagara. He passed through Chinene and saw how Boko Haram fighters had destroyed the village. "The entire village had been destroyed. I counted seven dead bodies, they all had gunshots wounds. They were all men." Together with some women who were looking for their husbands and children, they took the corpses to Attagara for burial.¹⁰⁷

Marcus Batare (not real name), a 60-year-old farmer and local politician from Chinene, hid in the church when Boko Haram fighters arrived. He said the attack happened in the evening and lasted one hour. After the Boko Haram fighters left, he and other villagers found four corpses. He said they saw Boko Haram fighters were still at the outskirts of the village and reported this at the army base: "We told the soldiers where they were sitting but the army refused to engage them." He left Chinene after the attack and went to Cameroon. Marcus said that the military had started withdrawing from the area earlier, from April onwards. He had frequently spoken to the soldiers about impending attacks: "On nearly all occasions, the army will not respond or act on our warnings... We used to give the army information about Boko Haram locations and weapons hideouts, the army would promise to follow up but do nothing."¹⁰⁸

On 1 June 2014 in the morning, Boko Haram attacked Halagwa, Ganjara, Agapalwa, Angurva and Attagara villages. Fighters returned to the area over the following three days, killing more than 100 people. Amnesty International was not able to verify the precise number of civilians killed. Chris Maka said that in the five villages altogether "68 people were killed on the first day of the attack alone. Some of the dead bodies were later thrown into a water well [by Boko Haram] in the town centre." He said women who came back to the villages buried these corpses while most villagers stayed in the hills. When they ran out of food, some people tried to get to the Cameroonian border. According to Chris Maka, Boko Haram fighters killed an additional 86 people who were trying to escape.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Amnesty International interview, February 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Amnesty International interview, February 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International interview, February 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Amnesty International interview, February 2015.