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EXECUTIVE

GUNMEN KILL 96 IN KATSINA

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Written by Atika Balal (Katsina), Isiaka Wakli & Ibrahim Kabiru Sule (Abuja) Hits: 11700



Governor Ibrahim Shema

. Benue violence leaves 23 dead

Gunmen went on a shooting spree in several villages of Katsina State and killed at least 96 people Tuesday and Wednesday night, on the eve of President Jonathan's visit to the state.

Survivors said around 100 armed men stormed the

villages riding motorbikes, and embarked on a house-to-house raid.

The affected villages are Kurar Mota, Marabar Kindo, Marabar Maigora, Maigora, Sabon Layin Galadima and Unguwar Doka, in Faskari and Sabuwa local government areas.

Residents said 40 people were killed in Mararabar Maigora, 28 in Maigora, 21 in Sabon Layin Galadima, and 8 in Unguwar Doka.

The gunmen had attacked the villages on Tuesday and returned Wednesday night to continue the mayhem unchallenged, survivors and local leaders said. Many people have fled the communities in the wake of the violence, and some have been reported missing.

Abdullahi Usman of Maigora village said he witnessed the burial of 28 people in Maigora and 21 at Sabon Layin Galadima. Member representing Faskari at the Katsina State House of Assembly, Shehu Dalhatu Tafoki, also confirmed the incidents, and expressed regret that the bandits were not confronted by security operatives.

"I got a call from my constituency that 50 people were killed in my constituency and I tried to go there but I was cautioned not to. My people warned me that the gunmen threatened to return. I was really shocked," he said.

Tafoki said he visited Funtua General Hospital, where he saw 25 injured people, 2 dead policemen and 2 dead civilians.

He appealed to the state government and governments of neighboring states to come to the aid of the people.

When contacted, the Transition Committee Chairman of Faskari Local

Government Area, Isyaku Faskari, said he was attending a security meeting where the violence was being discussed.

Spokesman for the Katsina Police Command, DSP Abubakar Sadiq, said he could only confirm that five people were killed at Kurar Mota in a clash between Hausa and

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Fulani herdsmen.

He said the command was busy preparing for President Goodluck Jonathan's visit to Katsina.

Also speaking on the violence, Rep Abbas Abdullahi Machika, who represents the affected areas in the House of Representatives, told the BBC Hausa radio that at least 69 people were confirmed dead while more bodies were still being brought out from the forest.

"As I speak with you, from last (Wednesday) night till this morning, at around 10:30, bodies of the people killed were still being brought out of a forest, which we call Faskari forest," he said.

"We cannot have exact figure of the people killed, but so far I can tell you we have had different funerals of more than 47 people in Mararabar Maigora alone.

"In Kuran Mota 7 people were killed, in Unguwar Rimi 7 were killed, Maigora 8 people were killed this morning. But as I told you bodies are still being brought out because the people, women and children, dispersed to the forest when the attackers stormed their villages."

Machika said also that the attackers appeared to be simply blood-thirsty as they did not rob the people.

"They don't take anything after they kill. They just killed people, burned commercial vehicles and houses and then left," he said.

Asked whether there was any intervention effort from the government or security agencies in the wake of the attacks, Machika said nothing had been done yet.

"You know the president is presently paying a visit to Katsina State, so virtually all the security personnel are there," he said.

Meanwhile, the Katsina All Progressives Congress (APC) has condemned the killings.

Speaking to journalists in Katsina yesterday, state interim chairman Ahmed Dangiwa called on the state government to immediately suspend all activities regarding President Jonathan's visit to the state.

"For two days, bandits have been on rampage burning houses and killing people. There has been no help from the authorities and the government is concentrating security in the state capital, all for the presidential visit. We wish to advise for immediate suspension of this presidential visit," Dangiwa said.

Meanwhile, President Jonathan has ordered the Armed Forces to comb the Rugu forest and find the attackers.

Jonathan gave the order late last night at a dinner reception organised for him by the Katsina State Government in Katsina.

The president, who was on a two-day visit to the state, regretted that the forest meant for economic purposes had turned to hideout for insurgents

He also directed the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to immediately send relief materials to the affected communities.

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Daily Trust

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we lost more than a hundred peace loving innocent souls as Mr president- yours truly- was given an order with a mouth-full of chicken

while commissioning some white elephant projects of his royal highness- yours faithfully- Mr shema

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