

# THE WORLD NEWS II

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## 144 inmates freed in Koton Karfe prison attack, 1 killed

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Nine of the 144 inmates set free during an attack on the Katonkarfe federal prison in Kogi State by yet to be identified gunmen Sunday night have been recaptured while 12 returned voluntarily, police and prison authorities said yesterday.

One inmate was killed while 144 others were set free by the gunmen whom the prisons authorities said were terrorists when they struck Sunday night.

Police spokesman, Acting Commissioner of Police Emmanuel Ojukwu, told newsmen in Abuja yesterday: "We cannot say for now who carried out the attack. For sure, they are criminals. The status of the suspects is not determined. Nine were rearrested while one was shot dead. Efforts are in top gear to re-arrest the others. Normalcy has been restored."

The gunmen arrived the prison around 9:00 pm in four Hilux vehicles and raided the prison for over two hours without interference from any agency while prison officers on duty fled.

Witnesses said after arriving KotonKarfe, the gunmen started shooting before attacking the prison formation, vandalizing the record office and setting the inmates free.

Sunday's attack was the second on the prison in two years. The first was in 2012 when 114 inmates were set free.

Meanwhile, the Kotonkarfe prison Comptroller, Omale Ilemona, said 12 of the freed inmates returned on their own.

"Around 9:30pm, I received a call that the prison was under attack. I called the governor and securities operatives. But before help could come, the gunmen had overpowered us, freed all the inmates and escaped," he said.

The Prisons Comptroller General, Aminu Suley, said the attack was the work of "organized external forces."

According to him, the attack was carried out by terrorists who found it easy because the prison was overcrowded.

Suley lamented the delay in concluding cases of awaiting trial inmates and urged the government to assist the judiciary to hasten the process.

"Some of the prisoners were not supposed to be here in the first instance. It is saddening that out of the 144 inmates, only 26 of them were convicted, the remaining 119 were awaiting trial. Some of them will return on their own either to the Kotonkarfe prisons or any other prison in the country before they are declared wanted," he said.

Governor Idris Wada who visited the prison decried the attack but frowned at its condition.

"I must say that the condition of the prison is absolutely not conducive. A criminal must be made to face the consequences of his sins but not in this manner. I will therefore purchase some mattresses and other beddings which I will send to the prison. We will also renovate this place as whatever happens to this place has effect on the state," he said.

He promised to use his powers to release some of the inmates and charged the chief judge of the state, Justice Nasir Ajanah, to do same. Wada appealed to the federal government to act on the early completion of the prison. The Kotonkarfe Prison was built in 1918 and renovated in 1938 to accommodate 50 inmates.