

# Armed bandits kill 23, raze houses in Zamfara

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Armed bandits kill 23, raze houses in Zamfara

Suspected armed bandits Friday afternoon attacked villages in Zamfara State, killing 23 people and burning down houses and food silos, residents told Daily Trust on Sunday.

Five villages, Barka da Yabo, Mallamawa, Tungar Kahau, Maikamarrimi and Gidan Anna, in Shinkafi Local Government Area, were targeted by the gunmen in the daylight raid.

The attackers, in their dozens, stormed the villages on motorbikes and opened fire on residents. They also torched houses and destroyed stored food items after the villagers fled.

Some of the communities were invaded as residents gathered in mosques for the congregational Muslim Friday prayer, according to a resident.

Another resident of Shinkafi Local Government, about 11kilometres from the affected villages, said some of the gunmen traced their victims to the farm and shot them.

“I attended the funeral prayers for the victims which ended few minutes ago,” said Yusuf Umar Shinkafi.

He said four people had been injured the attacks.

Some corpses were recovered from the bush, he said, adding that more bodies could still be found.

“They surrounded the villages and then torched the houses. They blocked all escape routes and killed who ever tried to escape the carnage. They killed at least 17 persons at Tungar Kahau village and I have no clear picture of the loss of lives in other communities,” said Sani Abdullahi, another resident.

“In Mallamawa village, at least five residents were shot dead and dozens of cows and other domestic animals carted away. They killed any animal that refused to go with them,” according to Idris Haruna.

It was gathered that when the bandits got to Gidan Anna village, all the inhabitants had fled after sensing trouble. The gunmen burnt the residential houses and other property.

Residents said the attackers vowed to attack other identified villages of Gidan Nababba, Bassana and Gidan Rijiya. “As I’m talking to you now, no security agent is there and some of the villagers have fled the communities.”

A military source told Daily Trust on Sunday that when troops got to the attacked villages yesterday, they were initially refused access, as the villagers accused them of arriving late.

“They told the soldiers to go back, querying them for not coming to their rescue when the gunmen were having a field day on Friday. It took a lot of persuasion before they agreed to let them in,” the source said.

Hundreds of lives have been lost to bandits attacks in Zamfara since 2011, a development that compelled the state government to enter into dialogue with the attackers last year, in a bid to end the carnage.

Many gunmen surrendered their weapons in return for money and government amnesty, allowing peace to return to rural parts of the state.

But the attacks resumed this year, in spite of a federal government-backed Operation Harbin Kunama that was launched last year by President Muhammadu Buhari, to flush out the bandits.

Last month, suspected gunmen ambushed troops deployed for the operation in the forest and around the villages, burning down five Toyota Hilux trucks belonging to the army, as well as carting away gun truck and other weapons.

The ambush followed a raid on suspected camps of the armed bandits.

Friday's killings, Daily Trust on Sunday learnt, have caused fears across the state, especially around rural communities with experience of attacks by the gunmen.

When our correspondent contacted the spokesman of the Zamfara police command, DSP Muhammad Shehu, over the incident, he said: "Give me some time, I would get back to you if I confirm."