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# How gunmen killed 11 persons, injured 12 in Jos

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*Late Chief Pharmacist James Gyang Tiri*

Last Sunday night, 11 people were shot dead by unknown gunmen in Lopandet, Dwei village of Du district in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. Twelve others also suffered varying degrees of injury. Attacks have become a daily occurrence in the state, claiming scores of lives, destroying properties and displacing thousands of people, thereby creating different camps for internally displaced persons.

These attacks have often been carried out under varied guises and christened different nomenclatures, such as farmers-herdsmen clash, indigenes-settlers clash, unknown gunmen attack, militia attack, among others.

What appears to be the difference between this particular attack and the previous ones is that while they often happened in faraway villages from Jos, the state capital, this one took place about 5 kilometers from the city centre. Again, the attack happened in an area where there are about two military checkpoints, a few meters from both sides.

Our correspondent gathered that the gunmen stormed the area in military uniforms. They drove in a Hilux vehicle and about four power-bikes, carrying three people each. Those in the Hilux were shooting sporadically with sophisticated rifles, while the two occupants of the power-bikes (apart from the riders) also shot indiscriminately. The panic-stricken people of the area scampered for safety, causing pandemonium. Apart from members of the communities that were caught in the fire, many passerby and travellers were also affected. The impact of the shooting became clearer the next morning when people began to collect the corpses of the dead from the roadside, shops and other places. Those injured were rushed to the Jos



*Late Chief Pharmacist James Brother and his wife*

University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) and the Plateau State Specialist Hospital (PSSH).

As a result of this, tension mounted in the area the next morning as angry mob took over the streets in protest. They clashed with policemen, injuring two of them in the process while their patrol

vehicles were damaged. Their anger was that the security agents were never proactive in protecting them but would only come after people have been killed and properties destroyed.

Also, some journalists who went to the area to get information on the incident were almost lynched by the irate youths who threw stones and other dangerous weapons at them. It took combined efforts of some elders and women to rescue the pressmen. The youths said their grievances with the pressmen were that regardless of the frequent reports of attacks, government had not taken any action to stop the killings. Some even accused the pressmen of complicity in the attacks.

One of those killed in the attack was a chief pharmacist in JUTH, James Gyang Tiri. Recounting her ordeal, his wife, Victoria said, "My husband called me around 7pm on that fateful day, saying that he was on his way from Gindiri and was already at a place called Bisichi. I was at home waiting for him with the children. When I didn't see him I called him throughout the night but his phone was switched off. In the morning, somebody called me, saying that my husband was involved in an accident but he was okay and I should come and take him home. So I took my kids in my car and went there. On getting there I saw so many people and cars on the road and I was wondering what was happening.

"I stepped out of my car and called the number that earlier called me, and the person said I should wait for him at a particular gate. When I got to the gate, I heard some women discussing, and one of them said, 'One of the victims is even a pharmacist.' I shouted and began running back to where the crowd was, but someone grabbed me from the back. It was the person that called me. He was telling me sorry for the loss and that I should take heart. I told him to stop consoling me and tell me what happened. He then narrated everything to me. I freed myself from his grip after that, pulled myself together and

went to his car.

“He was there soaked in blood, with gunshots on his body. I broke down and began crying. My children too were crying and shouting. The two eldest ones are old enough to know what was happened, while the little one was saying, ‘Mummy is crying. Who beat you mummy? Stop crying, you hear...’



*Sympathisers at late James Gyang Tiri's house*

“I didn't know that my husband

was dead, otherwise I wouldn't have taken my children there because such sight isn't good for them. It could remain evergreen in their minds and haunt them forever,' she narrated.

She said she was so devastated that she gave her phone to someone else to call his brothers and/colleagues in the office, who later came and took his corpse to the JUTH mortuary. According to her, his car was driven back home by one of his brothers while someone drove hers and brought her back home with her children.

She said her husband's phone and wallet were not found, noting that she was told the attackers or community members searched all the dead persons and made away with their phones and money.

“The annoying part of it is that the government is silent about all these killings. My husband is not the first. In his village, most of his relatives have been killed. Many people in other villages too have been killed, yet the government is not saying anything. Let the government put an end to these killings,” Victoria said.

Also speaking to our correspondent, the deceased's elder brother, Pam Gyang Tiri, berated the role of security agents in the incident. He alleged that as they were getting to the scene to pick their brother's corpse, they met some policemen nearby in about four Hilux vans and they said they didn't know the scene of the incident. He said their attitude left much to be desired, adding that he later discovered that the place was close to where the police were.

He said the incident happened in the district of the immediate past governor of the state and senator representing Jos North, Jonah Jang. It is also the area where Buken Academy, a school belonging to Gbong Gwon Jos and former comptroller-general of customs, Jacob Gyang Buba, is located.

Confirming the attack, the Police Public Relations Officer, Plateau State command, DSP Tyopev Terna, said that when they received a distress call that unknown gunmen were attacking Lopandet Dwei, the command immediately mobilised its personnel to the scene, but on arrival, they discovered that people had already been killed.

“The victims were immediately rushed to the JUTH and Plateau Specialist Hospital. Eleven persons have been confirmed dead by doctors while 12 were wounded and are now on admission. More security personnel have been deployed to the area to prevent further attacks on the community,” he said, adding that investigation into the crime was ongoing,” he said.

According to a statement signed by Major Adam Umar, the media officer of Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), a multi security task force in charge of Plateau, Bauchi and parts of Southern Kaduna, the call they received was that suspected armed robbers were invading a shopping area, shooting sporadically, and that troops immediately mobilised to the scene of the incident to contain the situation

In a statement by the publicity secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state, Sir John .T. Akans, the party condemned the attack and called on security agencies to immediately fish out the perpetrators and bring them to book to serve as deterrent to others.

Reacting, Governor Simon Lalong said he had instructed the security agencies to fish out the perpetrators.

In a statement signed by the Commissioner for Information and Communication, Yakubu Dati, the governor called on members of the public to resist any temptation for self-help, saying they should not play to the script of the perpetrators whose ultimate aim is to return the state to the dark era of bloodletting.

Lalong called on the people be vigilant and report all suspicious movements to the nearest security agencies.

A member of the House of Representatives for Jos South/East constituency, Hon. Edward Gyang Pwojok, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), expressed shock over the attack. He commiserated with the affected families, the community and the entire people of Plateau State over the sad incident. He prayed to God to comfort and grant families of the victims the fortitude to bear the loss. He also prayed for quick recovery for those who sustained injuries.

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