

Nasarawa APC chair 'assassinated', Zamfara imam, 30 others still in captivity

From Ibraheem H. Muhammad (Lafia), Shehu Umar (Gusau) & Tijani Ibrahim (Katsina)

1 The Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Nasarawa State, Philip Shekwo, who was abducted from his house on Saturday, was found dead yesterday.

While family members initially thought it was a case of kidnapping for ransom, police authorities in the state have said it was most likely an assassination.

Shekwo was reportedly taken away at about 10 pm when some gunmen stormed his home in Lafia, the state capital and took him to an unknown destination.

His corpse was, however, later found not far away from his house.

While confirming the development, Nasarawa Police Commissioner Bola Longe said the gunmen who besieged Shekwo's residence at Bukan Sidi area could be assassins.

According to him, "From what we have seen since yesterday (Sunday) and the intensity of bullet marks on the wall of the house, and the way they forcefully gained entry into the house, it is more than kidnapping."

According to Longe, an investigation had begun to unravel those behind the dastardly act.

He said the distance from his residence to where his corpse was found, coupled with the fact that there was no demand for ransom suggested a case of assassination rather than kidnapping.

"Where we found his body was too close to the house. Usually, when kidnapping is carried out, it is for profit, but when within a twinkle of an eye the man is killed without any demand whatsoever, I think it is assassination."

"That notwithstanding, we are going to carry out an exhaustive investigation into the matter," the commissioner said. Family and friends were seen in a sombre mood at the residence of the deceased with many of them crying.

Witnesses said while approaching the house, the gunmen shot sporadically into the air to avoid being challenged by the security men attached to the building and neighbours.

Early callers to the family included Governor Abdullahi Sule and Senator Umaru Al-Makura.

Governor Sule in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Ibrahim Adda, said he was traumatised by the gruesome and inhuman act.

"My prayers and thoughts go to the family of the late Shekwo. He was a great statesman, complete gentleman and loyal party man."

"This killing has further



■ Ministers of Defence and Transportation, retired Maj.- Gen. Bashir Magashi (middle) and Rotimi Amaechi (2nd left) with the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (2nd right), inspect the state of readiness of the facilities of the Deep Blue Project at the Western Naval Command in Apapa, Lagos at the weekend

Photo: DINFO NHQ

strengthened our resolve to deploy every resource to fight crime and criminality and secure our people and their properties. I urge all to remain resilient, as we fight those who are bent on instilling fear in us and disrupt the pervading peace in our state. We will not allow them and the Almighty will never allow them," the governor said.

On his part, President Muhammadu Buhari in a statement issued by his spokesman, Garba Shehu, said the nation's security system must do more to end the incidents of violence in the country.

The president welcomed the decision of the Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, to send reinforcement of men and materials to the state.

"I strongly condemn the killing of Philip Shekwo. He was kind and jovial. His contribution towards strengthening the party in Nasarawa State will not be forgotten. May his soul Rest in Peace," he said.

The statement said the late APC chairman was shot twice leading to his death, adding that police investigation would determine if it was an assassination or kidnapping-related murder.

Fish out the killers - APC

In a statement, yesterday, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) expressed shock over the assassination of its chairman in Nasarawa.

The statement, signed by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Yekini Nabena, said, "This is a dark day for the APC family. We condole with the late Shekwo's immediate family, the governor of Nasarawa, Abdullahi Sule, the State Working Committee, the party's supporters and members over the killing."

"We urge a thorough investigation by the police



■ Slain APC Chairman in Nasarawa, Phillip Shekwo

and other relevant security services to quickly fish out the sponsors and perpetrators of this evil.

Zamfara Imam, 30 others still in captivity as bandits kill 5

2 The Imam of a Juma'at mosque who was abducted together with about 30 congregants in Zamfara State on Friday are still in captivity, locals told Daily Trust yesterday.

Suspected bandits reportedly stormed Dutsen Gari community of Kanoma District of Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State and abducted some worshippers at a mosque.

The Imam was delivering a sermon ahead of the commencement of the weekly Juma'at prayer when the gun-wielding bandits surrounded the mosque.

It was gathered that five people were killed during the raid by the over 100 bandits who arrived on motorcycles.

The police in the state confirmed the siege, yesterday, and the killing of five people but said only 18 others were abducted.

It was learnt that the attackers targeted "rich sugarcane merchant" from

the congregants to collect a huge ransom.

Some sources also said the Imam had been released by the bandits because he had nothing to offer, but the police have not confirmed the claim.

Resident Halilu Adamu said he was one of the worshippers at the mosque but escaped by the whiskers.

"I was informed that armed criminals on motorcycles were approaching the community and I quickly got out of the mosque and locked myself inside my house," he said.

Adamu said, "I was listening to a sermon when my elder brother came and whispered into my ears that armed bandits were planning to invade the community. From inside my house, I could hear gunshots."

"My younger brother is among those kidnapped and we are yet to hear from the abductors whether they are demanding for ransom or not. Most of the surrounding villages have been attacked, people kidnapped and animals rustled," he added.

"There was pandemonium as everyone was scampering for safety," another source said.

He said a military fighter jet was seen flying above the

village but they were not sure if it attacked the positions of the criminals.

"It hovered for some time and flew away," the source said.

The spokesman of the Zamfara Police Command, SP Muhammad Shehu, could not be reached for comment at the time of filing this report.

He had earlier told AFP that "The bandits killed five worshippers and kidnapped 18 others, including the Imam."

Locals said the bandits have camps in Rugu forest which straddles Katsina, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger states from where they launched attacks.

A few weeks ago, the bandits kidnapped some married women and girls from Katsina, took them to the forests in Zamfara where they violated and beat them.

The women were only released by the bandits after their parents sold their farms and belongings and paid ransom.

Troop deployments and peace talks with local authorities including amnesty for the bandits by Zamfara and Katsina state governments have failed to end the attacks.

2 abducted as gunmen attack Reps member's residence in Katsina

Gunmen, Saturday night, attacked the Kusada residence of a member of the House of Representatives, Abubakar Yahaya Kusada, where two persons were allegedly abducted.

Kusada is a former Speaker of the Katsina State House of Assembly before he moved to the National Assembly.

"The assailants took away two house helps - a woman named Talatu and a young man named Suleiman," the source said.

Other sources said the kidnappers had earlier asked of the politician's mother but were told she was not around.

"They then took away the two victims both of whom are close family members," another source said.

In a related development, some gunmen have attacked some volunteers in Kurfi Local Government Area of Katsina killing three of them.

Residents said it took the timely intervention of security forces before the bandits fled.

Police spokesman in Katsina, SP Gambo Isah, was yet to confirm the incidents at the time of filing this report as he said he had to make some contacts first.

Also, the PDP Chairman of Sabuwa Local Government of Katsina State, Alhaji Lawal Dako, has been killed.

He died on Friday from gunshot injuries he sustained when bandits attacked his village, Labi, two weeks ago during which three people were killed and two others sustained injuries.