

Frustrated by banditry, Kaduna residents lynch suspected kidnappers

Last week, residents of Zangon Aya in Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State lynched three people they accused of working with bandits to kidnap residents for ransom. When *Daily Trust Saturday* visited the community on a fact-finding mission, angry youths issued a warning that henceforth, bandit will not be spared.



Residents also burnt the alleged kidnappers, personal effects at a village field

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Mai Unguwan Makam Zangon Aya, Malam Umar Yahaya has appealed to residents to always hand over suspects to the Police

The Kaduna State Government identified the deceased as Abdullahi Mohammed Gobirawa, his wife, Binta Abdullahi and their adult son, Hassan Abdullahi as victims of a lynch mob. But residents of Zangon Aya, in Igabi Local Government Area, where the killing occurred differ. They claimed they have been forced to police their community which has been the target of bandits and therefore will not spare any one who kills and abducts for ransom.

Daily Trust Saturday reports that in what is widely referred to as 'jungle justice', the people of Zangon Aya turned against three residents who relocated to the farming community 10 months ago. This was after some victims of a recent kidnapping identified one of the suspects, Abdullahi Mohammed Gobirawa at the kidnappers' den.

Kaduna State Commissioner of Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, had said the suspects had been killed by a lynch mob in response to the trio's suspected collaboration with bandits, especially in relation to recent kidnappings in the area.

However, when *Daily Trust Saturday* visited Zangon Aya, residents said the alleged Binta Abdullahi and Hassan Abdullahi were accomplices to Gobirawa, not his wife and son as insinuated. Many residents who were unapologetic at the turn of event expressed frustration that the authorities had abandoned them to fend for themselves. They claimed Gobirawa and his gang of accomplices had confessed to harbouring several bandits in their home, a situation that gave them leverage to attack and abduct residents at night.

One of the residents who asked not to be named said the most recent abduction of seven people in the community had exposed Gobirawa as a bandit. He said some of the victims had recognized him but were careful to conceal it.

"The victims had told us that during their captivity, they had seen the suspect among the bandits and he asked them; 'Do you know me,' but they said no. One of them however used to plait his wife's hair and so she had recognized him but knew that he could kill her if she admits that she knows him. So, she was smart enough to say she didn't know him," he said.

He said after the sum of N1.3m was paid to the bandits as ransom, the victims were released two days later but were scared to mention that they had seen Gobirawa among their captives. "One of the victims was bold and she told us that Gobirawa was among the bandits and he had even tried to find out if they recognized him."

Though the dead cannot speak and so Gobirawa and the two others cannot defend themselves but residents said since he relocated to Zangon Aya, a little over 10 months ago, Gobirawa had married a woman from a nearby community known as Ila. He had informed residents of Zangon Aya that he was forced to flee his community around the Galadimawa axis of Giwa LGA due to activities of bandits. However, a vegetable seller in the community told our correspondents that Zangon Aya, a community of about 42 kilometers from Kaduna city and known for its night patrol

defences, had in recent times witnessed alarming security breaches since the relocation of Gobirawa.

An elder in the community said contrary to reports that described Gobirawa as an informant, their investigations had revealed that Gobirawa was a kidnapping kingpin while the acclaimed son was a motorcyclist who is responsible for conveying bandits into the community.

Other residents told our correspondents that Gobirawa had acted as a recluse while in the community only leaving his home for the early morning prayers in the mosque. However, on the day he was killed, residents had waited out for him in the mosque but he did not show up. They had then apprehended his accomplice whom the state government identified as his son. "The youths returned and surrounded his house, then arrested him and took him to the middle of the town to question him. He confessed to providing accommodation for the kidnappers," another resident said.

But there was no mercy. Angered by all the atrocities committed against the community, many could not hold back and so, they lynched Gobirawa, as well as Binta and Abdullahi whom the residents said were his accomplices. Their remains were then set ablaze and buried in a nearby ditch while other residents invaded their home, removed their personal effects and burnt them at a village field.

Residents frustrated by government

"The government does nothing for us, the security agents do nothing and so we have decided to protect ourselves and that means we will defend ourselves against these bandits," a group of youths barked at *Daily Trust* correspondents at Zangon Aya.

When asked why they didn't hand over the suspects to law enforcement agencies, one of the youths said, "In Zangon Aya we do not know if there is a government because we have been abandoned, we are the ones who protect our lives and properties so we will not stop what we are doing, if we find out that you are a bandit, we will not spare you, even if it is my father."

However, the Mai Unguwan Makam Zangon Aya, Malam Umar Yahaya called for calm and advised youths not to take laws into their hands. "We know people are angry but my advice to the youths is that when they suspect these kinds of people in our midst, we need to investigate them then hand them over to the police. It is not right for us to take the laws into our hands," he said.

Though security agents have not responded to enquiry on the lynching in Zangon Aya, the Kaduna State Government had through the Commissioner of Internal Security and Home Affairs stated that Governor Nasir El-Rufai was worried about the violent actions of the citizens, and strongly condemned the extra-judicial killings.

Aruwan quoted El-Rufai as saying lawful means alone should be adopted in confronting suspicions of criminality, as the destructive practice of self-help would only result in greater harm.