

Terrorists kill dozens in Zamfara villages

From Shehu Umar, Gusau

Migrating terrorists have killed dozens of people in Zamfara villages between Wednesday and Thursday, families of victims and traditional authorities told *Daily Trust*.

It was learnt that many villages in Bukuyum and Anka Local Government Areas are currently under siege by the invading terrorists.

On Wednesday, the armed men attacked about five communities of Kurfa Danya, Kurfa Magaji Rafin Gero, Tungar Isa and Barayar Zaki in Bukkuyum and Anka LGAs.

Multiple sources gave different figures of casualties recorded during the rampage by the terrorists reportedly migrating to the western part of Zamfara State to escape onslaught by Nigerian troops supported by aerial reconnaissance.

It was learnt that armed men loyal to terror kingpin, Bello Turji, who were displaced by fighter jets of the Nigerian Air Force from their enclaves in Fakai forest in Shinkafi Local Government Area, were moving southwards of Zamfara when they descended on the locals killing many.

A reliable source at the palace of Emir of Anka told one of our correspondents last night that 43 dead bodies have been recovered from some of the affected villages.

It was learnt that the victims include harmless civilians and local vigilantes called 'Yan Sakai.

"So far, 43 people have been brought to the palace and are being prepared for burial," the palace source said.

"The bodies were recovered from villages that could be accessed...There are other places where attacks have been



■ Gov Matawalle

launched but could not be accessed yet," he said.

Among the dead was a leader of the vigilantes who was killed while trying to repel the invaders, it was learnt.

Another source said over 60 people have been killed even as the attacks by the rampaging bandits were still ongoing as at press time with other sources saying the number of people killed could be over 100.

Several people were also injured and their houses destroyed, it was gathered.

Systematic killings

A resident identified as Babangida, said the terrorists were moving in large numbers with some of them on motorbikes.

"They fired at residents and torched residential houses and food stores. The residents of the communities especially women and children had to scamper to

safety.

"Some of them are taking refuge in Bukkuyum Local Government Area and some other relatively safer communities. The whereabouts of dozens of other residents are still unknown.

"Up to the wee hours of Thursday, displaced persons were massing up in Nassarawa Burkullu community, some of them with serious injuries from gunshots. It was really very pathetic," he said.

Other residents said the remains of many of those killed are being picked for burial.

They said a lot of people were afraid to go deep inside bushes to recover the bodies of the slain persons.

Attackers using locals as human shield

A source said a fighter jet dispatched to the area on a rescue mission could not achieve a lot

because, after sensing danger, the terrorists melted into the civilian population.

"The terrorists are using the people as a human shield, making it difficult for the fighter jet to bomb them," he said.

"The fighter jet came, hovered and hovered but could not do anything because of fear of collateral damage. It left after sometime," he said.

Turji, others moving to new abodes

Sources familiar with the ongoing attacks and some residents said that the armed criminals were spotted setting tents in Gando forest in Bukkuyum Local Government Area of the state.

Gando is a community located near a forest and is 35km south of Bukkuyum town, the headquarters of the LGA.

The community and many other villages in the district are



■ 'Yan Sakai leader Gambo Abare who was killed by terrorists

being literally governed by the bandits.

Residents reported that some of the foot soldiers had erected thatched huts in an area inside the forest. They said the criminals were moving on motorbikes with some of them walking with herds of cattle.

"A bandits' leader known as Shehu Bayade is the spearhead of deadly raids, kidnappings and cattle rustling in communities in Anka, Bukkuyum and Gummi Local Government Areas of the state," a source said.

"We believe Turji and his boys were invited by Shehu Bayade to that forest. This is because in their own thinking, making the vast forest their abode would make their detection by NAF aircraft harder unlike where they had left.

"We are in serious trouble as a people. We are pleading with military and other security forces to extend their aggressive operations to this part of the state otherwise a safe haven for all sorts of dangerous people would be permanently created," he said.

The spokesman of the state police command SP Muhammad Shehu could not be reached for comments up to the time of filing this report.