

Bandits release 75 kidnapped Zamfara residents, withhold 6-year-old girl

● Kill 3, abduct 16 in Taraba ● 3 killed in Benue

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Bandits have released 75 people kidnapped from Yar Katsina community in Kekun Waje District of Bungudu Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

Daily Trust gathered that the freed residents were abducted in two major attacks on the community. The criminals had earlier kidnapped 61 residents, then 36 days later, raided the community and abducted 15 more people.

"The armed men, however, held a six-year-old girl identified as Ummi and told her parents that they had adopted her because they liked her. Her parents were not among those kidnapped.

"One of them said he had not born any child in his life as such he would adopt the girl. He promised to take good care of her. The girl is still with them.

"The residents had to pay N4million before the victims were released. The freed victims have already reunited with their families. Part of the conditions the criminals

gave was that the vigilantes must disarm," a resident identified as Sadiq said.

The spokesman of the police in the state, SP Muhammad Shehu, could not be reached for comments as at the time of filing this report.

Meanwhile, bandits have killed three persons and abducted 16 others in four villages in Gassol Local Government Area of Taraba State.

Daily Trust findings revealed that the bandits operating on motorcycles invaded the villages during the night where they killed two persons and abducted one other in Karar village.

Four persons were abducted each in Ndinyawo, Badija and Kwatan Sendirde villages.

It was gathered that two people were abducted around Tella area while one person was also abducted at Yarima village all in Gassol Local Government Area.

A resident of Karar village, Musa Karar, where about 30 vigilante members were killed by the bandits last month and three more persons killed three days ago, said the entire area was under siege.

He said the bandits crossed from Plateau State where they were chased

by a combined team of soldiers and police and had set up a camp at Hirmoi and Shoful forest in Gassol.

"We raised the alarm when we noticed the movement of strange persons on motorcycles but no action was taken.

"The bandits have threatened to attack the entire villages in Gassol chieftdom and warned of consequences if we revealed their hideout to security agents. Now everyone in the area is afraid because the bandits are in large numbers and well-armed," Musa said.

Another resident, Bello Wuro Jam, said within the last two months, more than 40 people including housewives were abducted in Tella, Sabongida, Karar, Yarima, Garwa, and many other villages in Gassol area.

Bello however called on the federal government to save their lives by taking necessary actions to flush out the bandits from the area.

But the police spokesperson in Taraba, DSP Usman Abdullahi, said victims of kidnapping were not promptly informing the police.

"As I speak to you, most of these cases were not reported to either police outposts in the communities

or to DPOs in Gassol and Mutumbiyu towns," Usman said.

He said lack of relevant information on activities of the bandits was hampering police investigation and action.

"We appeal to the affected members of the communities to always inform the police about any attack or kidnapping. We will treat the information in confidence," Usman added.

3 killed in Benue community - LG chair

In another attack, at least three people were killed in the early hours of yesterday in Yoyo ward of Kastina-Ala Local Government Area in Benue State.

The latest killings happened amid alleged threats by some local bandits to unleash terror on villagers in the area.

The Chairman of Katsina Ala LGA, Alfred Atera, had last week raised an alarm that the leader of some bandits neutralised by troops of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS) sent threat messages to the villagers in his locality.

Atera who confirmed the killing to newsmen in Makurdi yesterday, however, said there was calm at the time of this report.

He alleged that the bandits had formed an alliance with some militia herders to attack the villagers.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in Benue State, SP Catherine Anene, however said she was not aware of the latest killings.