

Dozens Flee As Bandits Kill 50 Farmers, Rustle Livestock In Niger

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Bandits

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At least 50 farmers have been reportedly killed by bandits in various communities in Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State, while several others have fled their homes.

Daily Trust gathered that the attacks occurred between Wednesday and Saturday.

In the latest attacks on about five villages which took place between 2pm on Friday and Saturday morning, an unspecified number of lives were lost and several others abducted including women and girls.

Our correspondent was told that while 13 people lost their lives in Kuserki community, 12 others were killed in Gidigori village and several others were yet to be accounted for.

Multiple Sources told Daily Trust that humanitarian crisis in the area had worsened since Wednesday as hundreds of Internally Displaced Persons including women and children from various villages trooped to Kagara, the Headquarters of Rafi LGA,

abandoning their villages for bandits whom they said now sleep in their homes.

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One of the fleeing farmers, Abdullahi Usman, told our correspondent on the telephone that bandits numbering over 100, rode on about 50 motorcycles, took over many villages from around 2pm on Friday and operated unchallenged until Saturday morning.

“It’s true that bandits have resumed attacks with full force. We have not had it easy in the last two weeks but the situation had worsened since Wednesday.

“As I speak to you, bandits have taken over most parts of Rafi LGA. They had been in Kuserki Community since around 2pm on Friday; they spent the night in Garin-Zara Community and rustled hundreds of cattle, goats and rams and killed an unspecified number of people,” Usman said.

Another Resident, Mohammed Yakubu told Daily Trust on Sunday that “they (the bandits) first came to Kuserki Community on Wednesday during which they killed 13 people. They came back on Friday afternoon and operated in all the villages around the axis until Saturday morning. People had fled. Right now, we don’t even know where many of our people are because everybody ran into the bush.”

Also speaking, Abdulmalik Usman, another fleeing farmer said, “they raided several villages including Gidigori, Gando, Kuserki and many others. Our cattle, goats and rams have all been stolen. After they had raided our villages, they headed to Madaka, Hanna-Wanka, Kukoki through Tegin axis this morning (Saturday). The entire Rafi LGA is not safe now. More than 50 farmers were killed in Rafi LGA this week.”

Victims alleged that the soldiers camped in Kagara and Pandogari did not respond to attacks, saying that they were only patrolling Kagara town.

One of the IDPs, Sanusi Umar, appealed to the federal and state governments to take quick and decisive steps towards addressing the security challenges, saying that “we don’t know what President Tinubu is waiting for to take action against these people. These people have finished us already. We are hungry and helpless.”

He added, “The current security situation in Rafi LGA requires immediate and urgent counter insurgency action. The past few days have been very disturbing, rural communities are attacked and people are being kidnapped for ransom while some people are being killed. In Gidigori village alone, 12 persons were killed including the leader of vigilantes. Also, Garun Gabas, Pangu-Gari, Yakila and Kukoki villages have all been attacked between Wednesday and Saturday.”

Other Sources told our correspondent that bandits later split themselves into two groups, with one group operating in Sakaba community, less than 4km from Kagara, the headquarters of Rafi local Government Area, while the second group reportedly moved to Tungan-Makeri community, 15km from Kagara town where dozens of cattle were reportedly rustled and two people kidnapped.

The Senator Representing Niger East Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Senator Mohammed Sani Musa on Friday lamented that the bandits had resumed attacks on Rafi, Paikoro, Munya and Shiroro local governments that formed part of his constituency.

He said the criminals were out to test the power and capacity of the new administrations at both federal and state levels.

He, however, said he believed President Ahmed Bola Tinubu and Governor Mohammed Umar Bago led governments would deal with the situation.

When contacted, the Niger State Police Command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, said security operatives had been deployed to the area to arrest the situation.

"We have reviewed tactical deployments in the area, and more deployments of PMF (Police Mobile Force) men have been made, in collaboration with the military to cover Yakila, Tegin, Kagara, Pandogari, Kuserki and its environs to forestall reoccurrence.

"Joint tactical teams are working assiduously to ensure that victims abducted are rescued unhurt," Abiodun said.