

145 killed as bandits attack 23 Plateau villages

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No fewer than 145 persons are said to have been killed in bandits' attacks on 23 villages in Plateau State.

The assailants reportedly killed 113 persons in 20 villages in Bokkos Local Government Area and 32 in three villages in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area.

It was gathered that the villages were attacked from Saturday night to the early hours of Monday.

The attacks were also said to have left hundreds of people injured and property destroyed.

Areas affected included Ruku, Hurum, Darwat, Mai Yanga Sabo and NTV villages in the Gashish and Ropp districts.

The Transition Committee Chairman of Bokkos Local Government Area, Monday Kassah, confirmed the incident to reporters yesterday.

When contacted for reaction, the spokesman for the state police command, Alabo Alfred, did not respond to text messages sent to him by our correspondent.

But Captain Oya James, spokesperson for Operation Safe Haven, a security taskforce maintaining peace in the state, confirmed the attacks to Daily Trust yesterday.

He, however, said he could not confirm the casualty figures at the moment, but said the situation had been brought under control.

"For now, the situation has been brought under control. More reinforcement has been deployed in the affected communities. But I don't have the figure of casualty at the moment," James told one of our correspondents.

A humanitarian worker who spoke in confidence said they counted over 180 dead bodies from the attacks.

We've recovered 113 bodies - Council chair

The Transition Committee Chairman of Bokkos LGA, Kassah, told journalists yesterday that 113 bodies were recovered from the attacks.

"The attacks were well coordinated, no fewer than 20 different communities were attacked by the bandits.

"As I am talking to you, we have recovered 113 dead bodies from those communities. We have recovered more than three hundred injured; some were taken to hospitals in Jos, some to hospitals in Barkin Ladi and others have been taken to hospitals in Bokkos.

"The security personnel have been doing their best, the difficult terrain reaching those communities has made the security not reaching



there on time to prevent those communities," Kassah stated.

The chairman of Barikin LGA, Danuma Dakil, who also spoke to Daily Trust yesterday, said the attackers killed 32 persons and burnt many houses in three villages in his local government area.

Dakil further stated that the search for more bodies was ongoing.

Attacks barbaric - Gov

Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang described the attacks as barbaric, brutal and uncalled for.

According to a statement by his Director of Press and Public Affairs, Gyang Bere, the governor directed security agencies to promptly apprehend the attackers and ensure they face the full force of the law.

The governor, who expressed deep concern over the incident, urged communities across the state to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to security forces for immediate action.

He questioned "The impunity of the attackers who inflicted harm on communities, destroyed property and evaded justice."

The governor assured that proactive measures would be taken to curb attacks on innocent citizens.

He sympathised with affected families, and urged them to find solace in God as the government diligently works to end the "prolonged violence."

Residents narrate ordeals

An indigene of Darwat community, Friday Maska, told our correspondent that his mother and younger brother were injured in the attack.

Maska said his mother, Rebecca Maska, was pursued into the bush by the attackers and shot, but was lucky to survive.

He said his mother bled for about three hours before help

came her way; while his brother, Nanpan Maska, had his hand cut off and head mached.

He said both his mother and younger brother were rushed to the General Hospital in Barkin Ladi, but were later referred to Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH).

Maska said the assailants operated from 6pm to 11pm.

The Berom Youth Moulders Association (BYM), under the leadership of Solomon Dalyp Mwantiri Esq, condemned the attack, describing it as an act of terrorism.

The association, in a statement, by its National Publicity Secretary, Rwang Tengwong, said the attack has already led to the complete displacement of thousands of persons.

Tengwong said the attack did not only demonstrate a blatant disregard for human life, but also sought to undermine the peace and unity that are at the core of their values.

He called on the international community to add its voice to the crisis on the Plateau, which has been going on for years.

"On a day meant to celebrate love, compassion, and togetherness, the perpetrators of this dastardly act have brought untold agony, suffering and grief to the affected communities.

"We call on the government and relevant authorities not only to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the incident, identify those responsible, and bring them to justice, but to swiftly come up with palliative packages as well as compensation for the victims.

"The BYM also urges the government to take immediate and decisive action to prevent further attacks and ensure the safety and security of all citizens regardless of their ethnic or religious background.

"We want to urge all Plateau sons and daughters to put aside their differences and come together to resist elements

perpetrating the dastardly acts," he said.

Not the first time

Hundreds of people had been killed in Plateau State within this year. Between January and June alone, a total of 201 people were reported killed in 27 attacks in seven local government areas of the state, including Riyom, Bokkos, Jos South, Jos East, Barkin Ladi, Bassa and Mangu, according to a tally by Daily Trust.

Attacks on communities in the state have been ongoing since the ethno-religious crisis broke out in Jos in 2001.

Since then, violence has spread to communities in the state, and there have been clashes between the farmers and the herdsmen with devastating consequences.

Three days ago, 22 persons were killed in attacks on Mangu and Bokkos apart from eight persons that were killed in an attack on Du village of Kwall District, Rigwe Chiefdom, in October.

The National Publicity Secretary, Irigwe Development Association (IDA), Davidson Malison, had said the incident in their communities had been a sad continuation of destruction of lives and properties of the people.

The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), Plateau State Chapter, had also said they had lost many members owing to attacks on them in the latest resurgence of violence.

Take ownership of security, defence chief tells Nigerians

Meanwhile, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen. Christopher Musa, has called on Nigerians to take ownership of security challenges in the country.

He spoke yesterday at the Defence Headquarters Hospital located at Mogadishu Cantonment, Abuja, when he

visited ailing personnel to mark Christmas and his birthday.

Musa, who also called on all Nigerians to have love for and confidence in Nigeria and fight together for its peace and progress, noted that running away from the country is not the solution to the present challenging situation.

He was explaining what he meant in his Christmas message that Nigerians should be united against the common enemies.

"It (Christmas message) entails that all Nigerians should take ownership of the challenges we're facing as a country. The security challenges, especially, are not armed forces or police challenges or any individual parastatal.

"It is a collective effort for all Nigerians and all Nigerians should put hands together. We cannot do it alone. We need the support of everyone. When you see something, say something, talk as quickly as possible so that measures can be put in place.

"We will continue to seek support from members of the public to take ownership of our challenges. Nigeria is our own. If Nigeria succeeds, we all succeed, if Nigeria fails we all fail and we don't want Nigeria to fail. So, I call on all Nigerians to give us all the support," he said.

Musa told journalists that the visit to the hospital was in tune with his leadership concept, which is people-centric, adding that the outreach was to ensure that people, both the security agents and the citizens, felt the impact of love being shared, especially their healthcare.

According to him, it is always good at this period of celebration to come around and see how those who are in hospital who don't have the ability to celebrate, how they are doing and to wish them well.

"It is for them to always know that we are always with them, we are praying with them and we want them to recover so that they can come back fully to life. We will continue to do that as we have been doing. So this is just not a one off thing, it is something we do regularly," he added.

Speaking further, the defence chief said those "traveling out of the country would not have countries to run to if the indigenes did not develop those countries.

He stated, "We must stay and fight whatever challenge is. Those countries they are running to, stood back and fought and got to where they are. If they had run away, they would not have achieved that for them to go and meet them."

The CDS, who was flanked by his wife and other principal officers at Defence Headquarters, donated hampers and cash gifts to all the patients in the hospital during the visit.