

Bandits abduct over 50 persons in Zamfara

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- Place N150m levy on residents
- Kill 10 farmers in Niger
- 'We are working hard to tackle problem'

✓ **B**andits yesterday abducted over 50 persons at Wanke and Gurusu villages of Gusau and Gummi Local Government Areas of Zamfara State.

Locals said the victims were abducted in Wanke and environs while working on their farms; and three others, along the Anka-Gurusu road in Anka Local Government Area of the state.

A resident of Kwalfada, a village neighbouring Wanke, said the kidnapped victims were abducted from their respective farms.

And in Niger State, at least 10 farmers from Wayam and Belu-Belu villages in Rafi Local Government Area were killed by bandits.

Residents said six of the victims were beheaded and the attackers went away with their heads.

How the Zamfara attack occurred

Speaking on the incident in Zamfara, a local said: "The victims were working on their farms when suddenly the bandits appeared on motorbikes and abducted them at gunpoint. They asked them to get on the motorbikes and they were taken away."

"Any attempt by the kidnapped persons to escape will cost them their lives because the bandits are now very angry with the people. They are angry because they are being killed by soldiers almost on a daily basis."

"We also learnt that the bandits have placed levies on various villages. For instance, the bandits' leader that succeeded Kachalla Halilu Sububu, Kachalla Mati, has placed N50 million levy on Kawaye village and the residents have only two weeks to pay the amount or have their village sacked."

"Also, a bandit leader Dan Yusuf, younger brother to another renowned bandits' leader, Ado Alleiro has placed a levy of over N100 million which he shared among different villages across the western part of Tsafe Local Government Area", the source said.

The source added: "Residents of Kucheri village are to pay N20 million, Kwalfada, N7 million, Magazawa, N7 million, Barebari, N7 million, Bilbis, N20 million, Danjigba, N20m million, Keita, N20 million and Kunchin Kalgo, N20 million."

"The issue of levy is an annual thing in this part of the state. During every harvest period, the bandits place levies on villagers because they know they have either sold their farm produce or kept it in the silos. In other words, they know that the locals have money or something which they can sell off to pay the levies", the source added.

Speaking to the BBC Hausa Service, a villager who confirmed the incident said:



■ Governor of Niger State, Mohammed Umar Bago

"We are living in agony, not knowing what has happened to our loved ones. No one has contacted us with any information about their condition."

"At least 50 people were abducted, including an imam. This is the second time gunmen have taken the imam—he was previously abducted alongside his associates, but was later released. Of the 50 victims, only seven are men; the others are women and children", the resident said.

Attackers unrelenting

Also, a resident of Kucheri village in Tsafe Local Government, Muhammad Musa, told Daily Trust that though a bandits' leader, Dan Yusuf, lost some of his men due to the recent onslaughts by the military, he is still terrorising the people.

Musa said: "We heard that Dan Yusuf is now scouting for boys to recruit into banditry. He recently went to Yanwarin Daji village and demanded for some boys and when the residents declined his request, he threatened to kill all the aged people among them. As a result, the villagers offered him five young boys which he took along with him."

"On Tuesday, Dan Yusuf attacked an Armoured Personnel Carrier of the Nigerian Army in Kunchin Kalgo village. Fortunately, none of the soldiers inside was injured or killed", he said.

A resident of Gummi town, Malam Usman Yusuf, said three bandits stopped a commercial bus conveying passengers to Gusau from Gummi and abducted the



■ Governor of Zamfara State, Dauda Lawal Dare

passengers on board.

"However, while moving into the bush, five abductees ran away, but the bandits went away with three persons," Yusuf said.

When contacted, the Zamfara State Police Commissioner, CP Muhammad Shehu Dalijan, said he had travelled out of the state for an official assignment, hence could not comment on the issue. He referred our correspondent to the Command's Public Relations Officer, SP Yazid Abubakar, who did not respond to several calls put across to him.

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The state's Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Amb. Bala Muhammad Mairiga, confirmed the abduction in Wanke village, but said: "I cannot ascertain the number of people abducted because we have not received any official report from the security agencies or traditional institution."

"On the issue of levy, sincerely speaking, we have not received any complaint from the affected villages. Nevertheless, we will investigate the matter and see what we can do about it. Zamfara State government will not fold its arms and allow the bandits to extort people."

"Governor Dauda Lawal-led administration is doing its best to tackle banditry and will continue to do everything possible within its power to end the menace", he said.

Niger attack

In the Niger incident, which occurred

at about 4am yesterday, Daily Trust gathered that aside the farmers who were killed, many persons were kidnapped just as some others sustained bullet wounds and were being treated at a clinic in Kagara, the headquarters of Rafi Local Government Area.

It was also gathered that the incident occurred when the residents were preparing for the early morning prayers.

Bala Tukur, a resident in the area told our correspondent that the residents of Wayam, Belu-Belu, Madaka and adjoining communities have fled to Kagara town.

"At Wayam village near Madaka under Kagara town, they killed 10 people and injured many. The way they kill us now is scary. Everybody has fled. As I speak with you, many people have not been able to harvest up to 50 per cent of their crops, including maize that has been due for harvest and is now becoming hard."

"Recently, residents of Kukoki were asked to pay N1.5 million to be allowed to harvest their crops. They paid, but the bandits came back to attack them four days ago", he said.

Last Friday, Daily Trust gathered that bandits invaded the ancient town of Zungeru, Wushishi LGA, moving from house to house including a hotel, kidnapping the occupants.

One of the residents said the invasion of Zungeru happened around 12am on Saturday during which a staff of Sino-Hydro, Saidu Yakubu aka Abacha and his wife were kidnapped.

"Since last week, bandits have been carrying out attacks continuously along the Zungeru-Tegina-Kontagora road. Our security operatives have been battling with them. They killed eight of our vigilantes, but I learnt that security operatives were able to block them somewhere around Pandogari and since that is the only route through which they could escape, they went into hiding around the rocky area", he said.

The state's Commissioner for Homeland Security, Brigadier General Bello Abdullahi Mohammed (rtd) said the state government is aware of the attacks.

He said: "The Niger State government is aware of the situation. All the security stakeholders have been mobilised to address the issue."

The spokesperson of the Niger State Police Command, SP Wasiu Abiodun, also confirmed the incident, saying that it was a suspected reprisal attack due to onslaughts by security operatives.

"It was a suspected reprisal attack, probably due to the response of the joint security tactical team which led to the rescue of about 23 abducted victims within Rafi LGA."

"However, the joint security teams are still very much on ground, patrol is being intensified to rescue the abducted victims", he said.



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