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Gunmen kill 11, burn houses in fresh Plateau crises

MONDAY, 15 APRIL 2013 01:00 FROM ISA ABDULSALAMI, JOS
NEWS - NATIONAL

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FRESH crises in different parts of Plateau State have resulted in the death of 11 persons and the burning of houses.

After a resumed attack on Wase Tofa village, four bodies of the victims were found Monday floating on River Wase.



According to an eyewitness, Dauda John, "four people were picked up from Wase River today. The gunmen came and started firing into the air to drive the people from their houses. That was how it all happened."

Plateau State Commissioner for Information and Communication, Mr. Yiljap Abraham, the Commander of the Special Task Force (STF), Major-General Henry Ayoola and the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Chris Olakpe, were in Wase on Friday last week for the restoration of peace and normalcy in the council.

That last week attack on Wase left about 25 people dead but Abraham denied the casualty figure, saying that it was 18.

Also on Friday night, three persons were reported killed in Kanana village in Langtang South by unidentified gunmen in their resumed hostilities.

It was learnt that unknown gunmen on Friday night at Turaki Ward in Langtang South stormed the area and sacked the village killing a woman and her daughter but the husband escaped unhurt. The gunmen carted away his cows.

The sleeping and isolated Maza Ward in Jos North Local Council was also attacked on Friday night by unidentified gunmen who killed two harmless indigenes of the area. Reports say that the gunmen came in and started shooting indiscriminately and two people eventually fell to their bullets.

It was further learnt that the villagers deserted their homes and farmlands and took refuge in the nearby bush and hills. According to an eyewitness from Maza, "You know at that time there was a heavy rainfall in Maza when the gunmen came. They started shooting so that people could come out from their huts and houses. There were no security men around to rescue us.

"Soldiers of the STF who were initially stationed in this area were withdrawn a week earlier before this incident happened. Maza is situated in a valley and people don't even know that something like that exists. No access road except that the government wants to open one road to link Maza to the town in Jos.

"The security people had been here for quite a long time now. But there seemed be no work for them because the place is quiet. So, they were withdrawn, as peace seemed to reign here. Not more than one

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week that they were withdrawn, the gunmen came shooting and people had to abandon their homes for the hills inside the heavy rain. People stayed in the bush in the rain."

The Spokesman of the Special Task Force, Capt. Salisu Ibrahim Mustapha, confirmed that there was an attack in Tofa along Wase, "where a man was ambushed and this resulted in a reprisal attack and many houses were burnt."

But Mustapha said that normalcy had returned while the situation was being closely monitored.

On Maza attack, Mustapha said that "what happened there was not an attack but rituals being carried out by the hunters there. People heard gunshots especially during these times of insecurity and they started running helter-skelter. I am not aware that people were killed in the process."

Abraham had earlier identified criminality as the major factor responsible for the recent breakdown of violence and hostility in some parts of the state particularly in Wase, Kanam, Langtang North and Langtang South axis.

The commissioner who described the talks he had with the traditional rulers, security chiefs and authorities of Kanam, Wase, Langtang North and Langtang South as frank and comprehensive, added that they focused on analysing the factors that led to the intensification of the violence in those areas as well as the tension they had been witnessing.


But the Centre for Advocacy of Justice and Rights, a Jos-based non-governmental organisation, lamented that for more than a decade now, the state had suffered a series of attacks such as ethno-religious crises leading to a huge loss of lives and property.

The Programme Manager of the centre, Mr. Adeniran Joseph, said that this pointed to the fact that there would be hunger in the state, increase in poverty, high rate of crime and Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV).

"Also, the democratic structure of the state and the dividends of democracy may once more be lost," he said.

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