

## Again, gunmen attack Izge, kill four residents

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- Tambuwal cautions against break-up
- Sultan tasks leaders on killings
- Nigeria will overcome its challenges, says Jonathan
- Police kill two suspected cult members

**BARELY** a week after 106 residents of Izge town in Gwoza Local Council of Borno State were killed by suspected Boko Haram gunmen, the town has again been attacked by insurgents who killed four people and torched houses in the early hours of Sunday.

**Out of the slain residents, three were women and the fourth an elderly man of 75 years.**

The development came as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, said Nigerian leaders whose actions are tilting towards encouraging the break-up of the country should learn from the mistakes of Sudan.

Tambuwal gave the advice just as the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar, urged the government to explore the option of dialogue in overcoming the insurgency that has continued in the North East with many more lives being lost daily.

Meanwhile, President Goodluck Jonathan has called for prayers from religious leaders for the nation under his watch, assuring that the nation will overcome its challenges.

In Delta State, the police have gunned down two suspected cult members at the steel town of Owwian Aladja, in their crusade against cultism.

Izge is a fishing and farming community in 185 kilometres south of Maiduguri, the Borno State capital.

According to an eyewitness, and resident of Izge, Mallam Apagu Thiza, the gunmen came through Bitar road and started shooting sporadically at the remaining houses before torching them with petrol-bombs and other explosives while chanting "God is great" in Arabic.

He said the gunmen had a field night of over-running the entire town for over six hours, as there were no soldiers or policemen to provide security to the residents that refused to flee after last Saturday's multiple attacks that claimed the lives of many people.

Thiza said: "We were shocked and terrified when the gunmen came again to attack us by killing four people, including three women and an elderly person in his house. These people have no sympathy at all, and have no regards to anybody's life. They came to wipe off the entire town of Izge and its residents while the Federal Government refused to send in more troops to protect us here. We are finished. The town has been over ruined with charred houses, vehicles and shops." But when contacted, the Borno Police Commissioner, Tanko Lawal, said he was not aware of

reprisal attacks in Izge by suspected armed hoodlums. He said as soon as the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Gwoza sent in his report to the Command, the media will be briefed.

According to the Delta State Police Public Relations Officer, Celestina Kalu, the cultists had shot dead a 22-year old young man, Mr. Ugweter Okpaka, on February 16 at Ifako Road, Owian Aladja.

Kalu said that when the police arrived the scene of the murder, they discovered that the deceased was fingered as the leader of the cult group, adding that another suspected cultist, who was identified as Shedrack Sume, was also shot dead by some rival cultists who operated on motorbike later in the day.

The police image maker said that the suspects met their waterloo three days later on February 19, when undercover policemen stormed their hideout at DEC township, Owian where one of the rival cultists was strategising on how to cause more mayhem in the community.

Tambuwal and Sultan spoke at the closing ceremony of the 28th National Koranic Recitation Completion hosted by Jigawa State at the Aminu Kano Triangle in Dutse on Saturday.

The Speaker said he is a firm believer in the unity and oneness of Nigeria even as he encouraged every citizen to continue to emphasize on the need for us to remain together as one united nation, noting that our strength lies in our unity.

“We must learn from the experience in Sudan after the break up into north and southern Sudan. We should take some lessons from that because we have a lot in common with that country when it was one. That brake up would not necessarily be a solution.”

On alleged wrong perception of Islam, he said: “Islam is a very comprehensive way of life beginning from how you perform ablution, how you clean your house and how you conduct yourself to how you treat your domestic animals. We have a way of life that is comprehensively defined.

“Islam is about peace, is about tolerance, is about understanding and accommodating one another. There is no place for violence in Islam. Islam is completely being misrepresented as a religion that encourages violence. It must be corrected that Islam is religion of peace, that preaches peace and live peace.”

The Sultan said there is nothing wrong for the government to bring anybody that is aggrieved to the table.

“It is not a lost of faith, it is not weakness. I have experience in that. Even the Americans, the Pakistans, Afghanistans are engaging the Talibans after series of war and killings for decades. Why should we wait to lose thousands of lives before we have to come down to the table with whoever is aggrieved. I am not using the word Boko Haram. “There are so many aggrieved people in this country, not only the Boko Haram, there are political gladiators who want to be in office, armed robbers who want to live a good life.

“Look at what happened in Bama two days ago where insurgents took over the town for eight and half hours from 4 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and nothing happened. We are down and low and it seems normal, things are not normal.”

Also yesterday, Tambuwal said the suspension of former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria

(CBN), Lamido Sanusi, was not in the best interest of the country. The Speaker who spoke in Abeokuta, Ogun State argued that the decision had eroded investors' confidence in Nigeria's financial institutions.

"I am not an economist but personally that (sack) will definitely send wrong signals to investors because they need to have confidence in the financial institutions, particularly independence of financial institutions of the country," he told journalists in Abeokuta.

Tambuwal spoke after an hour closed door meeting with former President Olusegun Obasanjo at his (Obasanjo) private residence. He described his visit to Obasanjo as a "consultation visit". While speaking where he worshipped at the Dunamis International Gospel Centre, Garki, Abuja yesterday, President Jonathan noted that with the prayers and support from religious leaders, Nigeria would overcome its current challenges and achieve its true potential.

The President, who noted that Nigeria has its own share of the negative things happening around the world, said the country's challenges would have been worse without the prayers and spiritual support from religious leaders.

"If you watch television, both local and foreign, we always have negative news as breaking news. We have our fair share of those negative news but your prayers have been helping, if not for your prayers, it would have been worse. We will get over our challenges. I urge you to continue to pray for the nation," he said.

The President thanked the officiating Pastor of the church, Dr. Paul Enenche, for his consistent support and prayers for the administration and the country: "I thank the pastor and his wife for their spiritual work for this nation. Scientific way of healing is not always enough, we need spiritual healing too. Even after any major operation, you are told to come for periodic check up, may be every three months, because medical or scientific help is not always complete. Spiritual help is total. So, I thank the pastor and the church on behalf of the country."

He advised the congregation that if they are privileged to be wealthy or hold the highest position in the land, they should use the privilege to serve God.

The President, who usually attend Sunday Church Service at the State House Chapel, used the opportunity to announce to the congregation that he had ordered that every last Sunday of every month, he would go round different churches in Abuja in order to fraternise with other Christians and appreciate them for their prayers.

Enenche prayed for the President to be able to take 'rugged' decisions at the right time, which are in the fear of God and rule of law, irrespective of whose ox is gored.

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