

# Pupils flee as bandits storm Kaduna school, abduct teachers

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in the Kudenda area of Chikun and escaped from his captors while his parents were negotiating the payment of about N15 million with the bandits.

"Also, troops while on aggressive fighting patrol in a forest around Kachia and Kauru Local Government Areas found a girl, Fatima Lawal, who also escaped from bandits. According to her statement, she was kidnapped about three weeks ago at Randa village, in Kadage area of Kauru Local Government."

**1** In more daring attack, gunmen have killed 17 hunters at Tsayau forest in Jibia Local Government Area of neighbouring Katsina State. The gunmen also abducted 25 other hunters who were in company of those killed and have made an initial demand of N500 million as ransom.

The incident occurred at the weekend when the victims entered the forest to hunt for wild animals. A leader of the hunters in Jibia said the victims had trekked for many miles into the forest and had unknowingly trespassed into a territory where the gunmen were camping.

"A shoot out followed and the gunmen pursued the hunters on their motorcycles, killing 17 of them and abducting 25 others. A leader of the gunmen had called and demanded N500 million for the abducted hunters, but later reduced it to N50 million. They are asking we pay the ransom or they would

kill all the 25 hunters with them."

He, therefore, called on the state government to come to the assistance of the abducted hunters, as they don't have such money to give as ransom.

The Guardian reporter in Niger State at the weekend undertook a deadly voyage by motorcycle to Shiroro Local Government Area where banditry and kidnapping hold sway. From settlements to farmlands, the journey to the epicenter of mind-boggling abductions and killing hotspots gets scary.

Over 7,000 villagers have reportedly lost their homes and fled the area due to bandits' attacks. Arriving at the village, the reporter met a few villagers taking refuge in the bush, where they all sleep together in anticipation of an attack so they can easily vote with their feet.

The atmosphere in the deserted Kokki village is best described as a war zone, unfit for human existence. All through the reporter's journey from Kokki to Magami, not only humans, but animals too were vigilant of motorcycles coming towards them, as it is usually a long convoy of motorcycles that announce the arrival of the bandits. Some turned sharply, ready in self-defence and others made quick dash into the bush.

A resident, Hassan Abdullahi, who has lost eight family members to banditry, said the village is no more a

home for dwellers, but animals. "We now sleep in the bush, which is now our haven. The moment we hear sounds of motorcycles or gunshots, we move deeper into the bush with our children. Wild reptiles have killed some of our children and young adults."

Recounting his ordeal, the Chief Imam of the village, Halidu Umar, said: "We have nothing left but horrid tales of dispersed families scattered around refugee camps and those seeking shelter in the bush."

He recalled a day the bandits came and met their houses empty. "They slept in our rooms and disorganised our settings. They also entertained themselves with our food and livestock. They didn't leave our village until 5:00a.m. the next day."

The Guardian gathered that bandits keep returning despite the declining fortunes made from their raids. The district head of Unguwan Magero, Kagara Rafi local government area, Umar Bawa, said during raids, anybody abducted is sometimes rescued for as low as one million naira, N200,000 airtime and foodstuff. Fifteen people were recently kidnapped and weeks after were released after N6 million was paid as ransom.

One of the tributaries to River Niger at Kaduna-Niger confluence, which cuts through Kokki and Kwatai, has also turned to a safe haven where displaced



Uncertainty over appropriate pump price...

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persons seek sanctuary from bandits.

**2** A vigilance group in Azza, Lapai local government area of Niger, foiled bandits' attack on the community killing nine bandits. The vigilantes also arrested four of the bandits after an intense exchange of gunfire on Sunday afternoon.

It was gathered that two people who were going to pay ransom met in the same place when they were trying to get the location to drop the ransom for the bandits. The two people met the vigilantes on the way and informed them about their plight and doubt about dropping the money for the bandits.

The vigilantes then took over and traced the bandits to where they were supposed to receive the money and this led to the exchange of gunfire. Residents of Gulu further said the bandits had killed four men who they kidnapped earlier. Bodies of

the men were found in a search and rescue mission by the vigilantes after a woman who escaped the bandits explained to them the route she took when she escaped. MEANWHILE, northern elders have again, cried out over the deteriorating security situation in the region, saying the ugly development was going out of control if nothing urgent was done to arrest it.

Alleging that killings of both security personnel and civilians since the beginning of the year was alarming, the elders decried what they term as "under-reportage of the situation by the media."

This was as they lashed out at those entrusted with maintaining security in the region for allegedly not giving President Muhammadu Buhari the necessary briefings and true state of the situation in the region, saying such act has aggravated the crises in the entire region. The elders, operating under

the aegis of Northern Elders for Peace and Development, in a statement by their national coordinator, Engr. Zana Goni, declared their support to the president that no ransom be paid to abductors or negotiation with bandits be entertained, warning against amnesty for terrorists.

According to the elders, ransom and negotiation were two major ingredients fueling abductions and other nefarious activities of bandits and terrorists in the country.

"We write to decry the rising state of insecurity in the Northeast in particular and Northern Nigeria at large and the deliberate attempts by some very highly placed government officials to use some unpatriotic online media to downplay the true situation on ground. This is unpatriotic and unacceptable to us.

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