

# Deadly Sunday as gunmen run amok in Kaduna, Rivers, Borno

- How gunmen killed eight security operatives in Rivers checkpoints • CAN, El-Rufai react to bandits' attack on Kaduna church
- Boko Haram invades army base in Borno • Gunmen abduct 35, overrun communities in Niger
- Policemen operate on mufti over harvest of attacks in Imo • Southeast governors, leaders seek restructuring to solve security challenges

1 From Lawrence Njoku (Enugu),  
Saxone Akhaine (Kaduna), Ann  
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Udeajah (Umuahia) and Charles  
Ogugbuaja (Owerri)

YESTERDAY, the risk map of  
the troubled Northwest  
was stretched to include  
worship centres after ban-

bandits attacked Haske Baptist  
Church in Chikun Local Gov-  
ernment Area of Kaduna  
State, killing two persons  
while many worshippers  
were abducted. Before yes-  
terday's attack, all tiers of ed-  
ucational institutions have  
been serially targeted.

An unspecified number of  
worshippers also sustained  
degrees of injuries with a  
medical doctor, Zakariah Do-  
go Yaro, of the Kaduna State  
Ministry of Health, among  
those killed during the inci-  
dent.

The church, located in Mani  
Tasha village, Kuriga Ward  
of the local government  
area, was attacked around

9:00a.m. by the bandits. The  
Kaduna State Commissioner  
for Internal Security and  
Home Affairs, Samuel  
Aruwan, confirmed the inci-  
dent.

A member of the church  
told newsmen that the ban-  
dits upon their arrival sur-  
rounded the church and  
started shooting sporadical-  
ly at worshippers who scam-

pered for safety in different  
directions.

According to Mr Yakubu  
Bala, gunshots were heard  
everywhere, throwing wor-  
shippers into pandemonium.  
"One worshipper was  
gunned down," he said. 2  
"Dr Zakariah Dogo Yaro was  
shot dead and an unspeci-  
fied number of people were  
kidnapped. Many wor-

shippers sustained injuries.  
As I am talking to you now,  
we have not seen some of the  
villagers who ran into the  
bush. Most of the villagers  
have fled to neighbouring  
villages," he said.  
IN a similar development,  
bandits invaded Bagoma  
community in Birnin Gwari

## Conglomerates reel

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# How gunmen killed eight security operatives in Rivers checkpoints

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Local Government Area of the state and killed six indigenes. Bandits also attacked Amfu village in Kachia council area where they shot a woman to death.

While reacting to the incident, Governor Nasir El-Rufai condemned the attack on a place of worship in Chikun and other parts of the state. He described them as shocking acts of depraved persons far removed from humanity.

The governor who roundly denounced the attack on the church added that attacking innocent worshippers, who were exercising their natural and lawful rights to assembly, represented the worst kind of evil. He prayed for the repose of the souls of the slain and speedy recovery for the injured.

Earlier this month, tens of students were abducted by gunmen at Greenfield University, with three of them later confirmed dead at the weekend. This was after over 30 students of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation in the Afaka area of the state were kidnapped. In its reaction, Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Kaduna, Reverend Caleb Ma'aji, said their hearts are saddened over the sorry state of the security situation in the state.

"Today, innocent worshippers who went out for nothing but to worship and pray to God were attacked, a medical doctor and one other person killed, many members injured and others taken into captivity. This is happening in a nation that her constitution allows freedom of religion yet this freedom is not guaranteed.

"We are appealing to relevant agencies and praying for the safe release of the abducted members and in-

deed all others in captivity. The Kaduna State Government and the FG should stop making noise about insecurity and simply act now before Nigerians will have no option than to turn to self-help."

MEANWHILE, gory details have emerged of how some gunmen raided checkpoints along the busy Port Harcourt-Owerri Road, killing eight security operatives in Rivers State. It was gathered that the gunmen, who started their operations around 8:00p.m. on Saturday, attacked four checkpoints from Elele to Omagwa in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

"Out of the eight operatives killed, three were said to be military personnel, three customs officials and two policemen. Some were reportedly beheaded while others were burnt beyond recognition.

Sources said the gunmen gained entrance into Omagwa and Elele through the border towns in Imo State. They were said to have marched through the bush paths and swooped on the security men on duty.

A police situation report dated April 25, identified the gunmen as members of the proscribed Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB). One of the attacked checkpoints located along Airport Road Omagwa, belonged to the Joint Task Force (JTF) and was manned by nine policemen and two soldiers.

It was gathered that two burnt bodies of security operatives were later recovered at the JTF checkpoint, which was scattered and burnt by the gunmen. The gunmen, according to the report, later invaded a checkpoint of the Nigeria Customs Service at Isioikpo killing three customs officials.

They were said to have advanced to attack the Police Area Command at Isioikpo but were repelled by gallant policemen on duty.

The Rivers State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Nnamdi Omoniri, confirmed the attacks on police checkpoints but failed to mention casualty figures. He said: "I can confirm the attack on security personnel along the Omagwa/Isioikpo/Elele Owerri Road. Details are sketchy.

"The Commissioner of Police has launched a full-scale investigation into the dastardly attack with a view to arresting the perpetrators and bringing them to justice. Meanwhile, the area is calm with reinforced and increased joint patrols of that stretch and other areas in the state by the security."

The Rivers State Governor, Chief Nyesom Wike, has consoled with the security agencies and families of the slain operatives over their loss. Wike, who condemned the killings in a statement by his Special Assistant on Media, Kelvin Ebiri, described it as barbaric and dastardly attack.

The governor said there is no justification for such heinous and condemnable attack targeted against innocent security personnel on legitimate duty of protecting life and property in the state. He charged the security agencies to be vigilant, as he affirmed that the government and people of Rivers stand in solidarity with security agencies at this difficult time of unwarranted and mindless violence.

ALSO yesterday, insurgents engaged troops at their base in Mainok community of Kaga Local Government Area, Borno State. The insurgents stormed the military base around 3:00p.m. with an intention of sacking the base to loot arms and ammuni-

tion, but the troops stood their ground and repelled the attack with severe casualties reportedly inflicted on the terrorists.

This was after the insurgents had attacked residents leaving many dead. The terrorists who came in no fewer than 15 gun trucks burnt down the military super camp in the community.

The latest attack is coming a few days after the insurgents attacked Geidam, the headquarters of Geidam Local Government Area of Yobe State and hometown of the acting Inspector-General of the Police, Baba Alkali, where they have reportedly hoisted flags.

OVER 35 persons have been abducted and herds of cattle rustled as gunmen suspected to be bandits attacked Chiri Boda and Fuka in Shiro Local Government Area of Niger State.

The attack, which occurred in the early hours of yesterday left many villagers disoriented as many of them scampered into different directions in the bush for their lives. The bandits invaded the communities on motorcycles.

Chairman, Niger Concerned Citizens, Alhaji Muhammad Awaisu, who confirmed the incident, disclosed that 10 out of the 15 wards in Shiro Local Government Area were under the control of the daredevil bandits.

He said the only five wards that were not under bandits' control are: Gusoro Zumba, Bongajiya, Bina, Sheyi lapa and Ubandoma, but were mostly occupied by the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from various wards of the council areas seeking temporary refuge.

The attack came barely 48 hours after Deputy Governor Ahmed Ketso visited the IDPs camp in Gwada and lament-

ed that security issues in the state were overwhelming. THE Guardian gathered at the weekend that authorities of the Area Command in Owerri, at the weekend, may have released detainees in the facility's cell. A source told The Guardian that some hoodlums have written the command to promptly free all detainees or wait for a serious attack on them.

Similarly, other divisions and stations may have followed suit in compliance of such threats of attacks.

Already, many police officers of the state command have jettisoned wearing their uniforms in preference for mufti. This is to avert any identification in the wake of frequent attacks and killings by gunmen.

Also, the city of Owerri and environs appear calm as influential politicians and individuals who hitherto were in the habit of moving around in siren-fitted vehicles have been going around without police escorts. Many government officials in the state are covering their vehicle number plates over fears of being easily identified by attackers.

PIQUED by escalating attacks in the region, Southeast governors, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, religious and political leaders of the zone yesterday rose from their meeting in Enugu State and restated the need for the restructuring of the country even as they called on the Federal Government to immediately fish out and prosecute those behind the attack at the country home of Imo State governor, Hope Uzodinma.

The leaders also asked the various attorneys general and House of Assembly in the zone to amend existing state laws to accommodate the zone's new security outfit, Ebube Agu.

The meeting attended by

host governor, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi; Ebonyi governor, Dave Umahi; Abia governor, Okezie Ikpeazu; and deputy governor of Imo, Prof. Placid Njoku, restated their ban on open grazing in the zone and called on security agencies and local vigilantes to enforce it in all states of the south-east.

Reading the communiqué of the meeting, chairman of southeast governors' forum, Umahi, said the meeting was in support of restructuring, setting up of state police and other national issues to tackle increasing insecurity in the country.

He condemned the attack on Uzodinma and other state infrastructure, noting that arresting and prosecuting the perpetrators would restore hope in the security of the zone.

Umahi restated the adoption of Ebube Agu with its headquarters in Enugu, stressing that the outfit would work with the police and other security agencies in her operations for the protection of the southeast region.

HOWEVER, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) yesterday alleged that all cattle markets in the Southeast provide safe havens for bandits and terrorists masquerading as herdsmen.

IPOB Media and Publicity Secretary, Comrade Emma Powerful, spoke in a release while reacting to the recent assault on Nigeria Police and Enugu State government officials at the Enugu Artisan market. In a telephone chat with Channels Television last night, he said a new commander had been appointed in place of the slain IPOB commander Ikonso. He also promised serious and series of reprisals in the coming days.