

Fresh attacks in Plateau, as 140 corpses litter Barkin-Ladi

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DESPITE the national outrage that greeted weekend coordinated attacks on the Berom natives of Riyom and Barkin-Ladi Local Government areas

- Boko Haram claims responsibility for killings
- NASS suspends plenary in honour of slain Senator

of Plateau State, gunmen were reported to have continued to invade the communities with fresh attacks on Tse and Shong villages.

The weekend attacks claimed over 100 lives, including those of Senator representing Plateau North, Gyang Dantong, and state House of Assembly Major-

ity Leader, Gyang Danfulani.

The Plateau State Government had blamed Fulani herdsmen for the massacre.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Member representing Riyom State Constituency in the state House of Assembly, Daniel Dem, confirmed this to newsmen on Tuesday evening.

Dem said: "I can authoritatively confirm to you that as I am talking to you now, the same gunmen from top of the mountain have attacked two more villages.

"The two villages, Tse and Shong, have been reduced to ruins with no house standing. The gunmen came in their usual stand with sporadic shooting.

"The villagers were scared and they ran out of their houses, the gunmen set the houses ablaze and the villagers have joined the numbers of the growing displaced people in the area."

The lawmaker said "the Defence Headquarters and Force Headquarters need to intervene at this point to save lives.

"As I am talking to you now, those 140 corpses are still lying there without burial, we are still afraid of going back there.

"Let me commend the STF (special military task force on Jos crisis codenamed 'operation safe

haven') in Plateau State for their efforts, without them this situation would have been worse.

"They actually helped during the attacks in Matse while we were doing the burial; they came there with their armored tank and as the rest of the people ran for safety, the STF shot from the armoured car twice, this scared the gunmen from coming after us.

"If the STF had shown their superior power earlier than that the gunmen would not have attacked our people during the mass burial, our two legislators would not have died of the shock.

"I wish the STF had acted faster than they did, but all the same they deserve commendation and I'm urging them to do more to help our people," Dem said.

Meanwhile the STF has reacted to conflicting reports in some media on the attacks, saying the two lawmakers who died on Sunday slumped due to panic and not gunshot.

In a statement, media officer of the STF in Jos on Tuesday evening, Salisu Mustapha, said "the reaction became necessary to correct some wrong media reports over the cause of death of the lawmakers."

Salisu added that "the panic that caused the death of the Senator and Majority Leader would have been avoided if they had listened to instruction of the STF Platoon Commander, DSP Suleiman Kabiru, who asked the people to lie down following the sound of the sporadic gunshot; the people chose to run rather than laying down and the stampede caused the deaths."

To honour the slain Senator and Plateau State lawmaker, both chambers of the National Assembly on Tuesday suspended their plenary sessions till today.

The late Dantong was the Chairman of Senate Committee on Health.

Barely 10 minutes after the opening prayer and announcement by Senate President, David Mark, Senate Leader, Victor Ndoma-Egba, moved the motion for a one minute silence in honour of the departed Senator and adjournment of plenary till Wednesday.

The motion was immediately seconded by Senate Minority Leader, George Akume.

The Senators immediately filed out of the chamber in quiet mood devoid of all the camaraderie of backslapping.

A large number of the Senators appeared in black dresses in mourning of their departed colleague, as a they crowded round the condolence register opened at the entrance of the Senate chamber for late Dantong.

"Mark said the Senate will find a convenient time for a valedictory service for Dantong after consultation with the family and the Plateau State Government.

In the House of Representatives, the plenary was suspended in spite of the several legislative items in the day's Order Paper.

The items ranged from presentation of bills, reports, motions and consideration of reports.

The Order Paper contained seven bills to be presented for First Reading, three reports for presentation, three motions to be moved, one bill for Second Reading and seven reports for consideration.

But all these were abandoned to honour a fallen hero.

Speaker of the House, Aminu Tambuwal, had after taking the official prayer, examined and approved the votes and proceedings of the last legislative day.

The extremist Islamic sect, Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati

Wal-Jihad, otherwise known as Boko Haram, has claimed responsibility for the weekend coordinated attacks on villages in Riyom and Barkin-Ladi.

In a statement sent by e-mail to newsmen, the terrorist group said its fighters unleashed the attacks on security forces and civilian population in the mainly Christian villages "to avenge past killings of Muslims in the state."

The statement, written in Hausa and signed by the group's spokesman, Abul Qaqa, also faulted claims attributed to the National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, a retired Army Colonel, that he had secured the telephone numbers of Boko Haram leaders through which to engage them in dialogue.

"We have heard it being peddled that the new National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, has secured a means of engaging us with dialogue; this is a fresh lie," Abul Qaqa said.

The group also claimed responsibility for recent attacks at Kurma and Rijiyar Zaki quarters in Kano, adding that it will continue with similar campaigns against government officials, security forces and their "civilian collaborators."