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How Gunmen Killed 43 Students In Yobe

Our Correspondents

— February 26, 2014

Boko Haram cowards yesterday killed about 43 innocent students of the Federal Government College (FGC), Buni-Yadi in Gujba local government area of Yobe State.

The blood hounds, who avoid face-to-face combat with military forces, now attack soft targets in remote villages and schools, apparently to make good

Nigerians sad.

A source told LEADERSHIP that about 50 gunmen stormed the school, which is a few kilometres away from the state capital Damaturu, killing the students and injuring others.

LEADERSHIP gathered that the gunmen also set some school buildings, cars, classrooms and staff quarters on fire during the attack.

An eyewitness, Mallam Sani Yadi, told our correspondent that the gunmen entered the school around midnight and started shouting on the students and attacking whoever came out.

LEADERSHIP learnt that the attackers shot from different directions while calling on them to remain inside their hostels, with the intention of burning down the dormitories with the students alive.

He said, "They fired shots from different places and killed whoever attempted to escape. That was how they took several innocent lives."

A survivor, Haruna Kabir, told LEADERSHIP on phone that he heard gunshots from afar and sensed that calamity was befalling the school area. So, he and his friend escaped into the bush.

Spokesman of the state JTF Eli Lazarus confirmed the incident to the Hausa Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

The state commissioner of police, Sanusi Rufai, also confirmed that 40 people were killed, adding that it was not immediately clear if all of the dead were students.

Rufai said that many of the students died in flames as the school was burned to the ground, adding that all the dead were males as no female student was touched.

The state governor, Ibrahim Gaidam, during his visit to the scene of the incident, said that the attack was synonymous to last September's assault on the College of Agriculture, Mamudo, where over 40 students were killed.

Gaidam and his Borno State counterpart, Kashim Shettima, have fiercely criticised the military's record in combatting Boko Haram in the region, insisting that more resources were needed to defeat increasingly well-armed insurgents in the troubled area.

The failure of the military to protect civilians is fuelling anger in the north-east, the region worst affected by the four-and-a-half-year-old insurgency and an offensive ordered by President Goodluck Jonathan in May has failed to crush the rebels and triggered reprisals against civilians.

Attackers spared women, told them to go home and get married

A spokesman for a Nigerian governor says soldiers who were guarding a checkpoint near a government school were mysteriously withdrawn from the checkpoint, just hours before an attack yesterday by suspected Islamic extremists.

The attack left at least 29 students dead at a school dormitory.

Officials say female students at the co-ed school were spared — and that the attackers instead told them to go home and get married and to abandon their Western education.

The attackers set a locked dormitory on fire. As students escaped through the windows, they were shot and their throats were slit. Some were burned alive.

The governor's spokesman says he will be asking questions about why the school was apparently left unprotected.

Nigeria's military has reported arresting several soldiers accused of aiding and passing information to extremists of the terrorist network Boko Haram (BOH'-koh hah-RAHM'). The nickname means "Western education is forbidden."

More than 300 civilians have been killed this month in Nigeria in a series of deadly attacks.

You're deranged fanatics, Jonathan tells Boko Haram

President Jonathan yesterday described members of the Boko Haram sect as "deranged terrorists and fanatics" who have become bereft of "human morality" and as such descended to bestiality" as characterised by their mindless killings of students in Yobe.

In a statement by his special adviser on media and publicity, Dr Reuben Abati, the president extended his "heartfelt condolences to the parents and relatives of the murdered students".

The statement made available to LEADERSHIP noted: "President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has received with immense sadness and anguish news of the callous and senseless murder by terrorists of scores of students at a college in Yobe State in the early hours of today.

"The president wholly condemns the heinous, brutal and mindless killing of the guiltless students by deranged terrorists and fanatics who have clearly lost all human morality and descended to bestiality. He assures the nation that his administration will not relent in its ongoing efforts to end the scourge of terrorism in parts of the country which has sadly claimed more innocent lives today.

"The armed forces of Nigeria and other security agencies will continue to prosecute the war against terror with full vigour, diligence and determination until the dark cloud of mass murder and destruction of lives and property is permanently removed from our horizon."

Jonathan's comments on Borno wrong - APC

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has condemned President Jonathan's vituperation against Borno State governor Kashim Shettima during his "Media Chat" on Monday night, calling it unwarranted, un-presidential and petty.

In a statement issued in Abuja on Tuesday by its interim national publicity secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the party said President Jonathan was wrong to have threatened, no matter how subtly, to withdraw from Borno the troops who are battling against Boko Haram insurgents, and urged him to apologize to the people of Borno and to all Nigerians for the presidential indiscretion.

It said the threat, which was in response to the statement credited to the governor, that the soldiers needed to be better equipped and more motivated, showed clearly that President Jonathan does not have a full grasp of what is expected of him as president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

"Mr President, your most important duty as president is to ensure the welfare and security of all Nigerians, irrespective of the criticisms you may face or whether or not they voted for you. Therefore, you are not doing anyone a favour by performing that duty. It is the role you swore an oath to perform.

"Also, even if you feel that the governor should not have made the statement he made, it is incumbent upon you, as the president and the father of the nation, to take the higher road, instead of choosing a public forum to air your grievances.

Wittingly or unwittingly, Mr President, you have played into the hands of the insurgents who must by now be gloating at the discordant tunes in government over the battle against them," APC said.

According to the statement, the party was justified in its call on the president not to go ahead with his reported plan to remove the governor and replace him with a military administrator. "President Jonathan should know that a leader cannot afford to be taking decisions on the basis of a perceived slight or criticism, because such decisions are most likely to be wrong and counter-productive. He should also use his enormous powers as president for the benefit of the people, not to their disadvantage.

"By his threat to pull out the troops from Borno for one month, he has further victimized the good people of the state, who have been at the receiving end of the senseless attacks by Boko Haram. A retraction of his threat and an apology to the people will be a good starting point for Mr President to make amends," APC said.

Boko Haram has taken freedom of religion too far

- Skye Bank chairman

The quest of the Boko Haram insurgency to impose Sharia legal system on Nigeria is an expression of freedom of religion to the extreme which must be stopped at all cost.

The chairman, Skye Bank, Nigeria, Dr Olatunde Ayeni, made this assertion yesterday in Abuja in his keynote address at the on-going

African Berlin International Conference (ABIC)/ National Defence College Conference with the theme "Revolts and Change, Individual Freedom and National Security: Africa in the Light of Popular Uprisings".

Ayeni, who set the tone for the discourse, recalled the ongoing uprising in the Arab World and urged the security operatives to do all it takes to put an end to the Boko Haram insurgency. He argued that the agitation is religious extremism that could destroy the country.

"The outbreak of the Boko Haram insurgency in July 2009 has in no small measure foisted new security challenges on the Nigerian nation, raising critical questions about the real intent of the sect. The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria paints a picture of the freedom of worship or of religion or of association taken too far – almost to a limitless dimension".

According to him, "There is no known international charter on human rights, not even the UN charter on human rights that guarantees a limitless personal freedom, knowing full well that a man's rights begins where another man's right ends. It is indeed foolhardy to contemplate that an individual freedom of worship carried in a manner of sheer violence and rebellion to the state and its national interest, as exhibited over time by the insurgents, should subsume the collective rights of the citizenry. A right that is so crafted and so called is indeed no right at all! No individual freedom is superior to the national interest or the collective rights of the citizenry."

Earlier in his welcome address, the commandant of the College, Rear Admiral Patrick Agholor, urged the participants "to come up with pragmatic recommendations that could aid policy makers and governments to mitigate some of the daunting development challenges of Africa".

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