

Boko Haram Kills 300, Wipes Out 3 Villages

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agency report

No fewer than 300 villagers were reportedly killed in three communities around Gwoza local government area of Borno State on Monday as gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram but fully kitted in military fatigue uniform attacked them, eyewitnesses and security operatives said.

A few villagers in Danjara, Agapalwa and Antagara who managed to escape the attack are currently taking refuge in the rocky Gwoza hills, while others mostly women and children who were spared by the attackers have found their way into Cameroonian territory.

A state lawmaker representing the region, Peter Biye, told the Hausa Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) that "they (Boko Haram) opened fire on villagers and burned houses and churches to the ground". Dozens of people were killed in each attack, he said, but he could not give precise figures.

Andrew Tada, an indigene of Attagara who lives in Maiduguri, the state capital, told the BBC that he lost two cousins in the attack, noting that residents had told him they were preparing to bury 45 people from that village alone.

"It is very sad and the villages are deserted now; we are just asking government to give us security to go there tomorrow (today) to evacuate the corpses for burial," Tada said.

Impeccable sources who saw it all told LEADERSHIP that the gunmen that attacked the villages pretended to be soldiers who had come to protect them from further attacks, but when the fake soldiers managed to gather all the villagers at the centre of the village in Antagara, they opened fire on them, killing hundreds and injuring several others.

"They came in military Hilux vans, and we all thought they were the soldiers that we earlier reported to that the insurgents might attack us; when they came in over 10 Hilux vehicles we all felt relieved that, at last, the military had arrived. So we went to them and they told us that 'we are soldiers and we are here to protect you all'. They then urged all of us to converge at a particular spot at the centre of the village; we all complied. But when they saw that a sizeable number of us had converged, they began to shout 'Allahu-Akbar, Allahu-Akbar' on top of their voices, then they began to fire at the people

continuously for a very long time until all that gathered were

dead," said a community leader who would not say his name for fear of his safety. "I lost four of my blood brothers in the massacre. I was lucky to escape because I was not very close by when the gunmen started shooting at our people. I was going round to inform people that the soldiers had come and they wanted to address us. I managed to escape through villages in Adamawa State and later made it to Maiduguri".

The source said while the gunmen were killing the villagers in the three villages, some others who were riding on motorcycles lay in ambush outside the villages and continued to pick on the fleeing villagers.

"When some of the villagers managed to escape, they were unfortunately waylaid outside the villages by some gunmen on motorcycles who would catch and slaughter the men and young boys; they only allowed women and children to go," said the source.

The source added that Boko Haram gunmen had for over a month now hoisted flags in attacked villages like Ashigashiya and Chinene, but each time they ran to the military to report their plights, "the military personnel in Gwoza would say they have not been given order to go to that area; even when they are hearing the sounds of their guns, they really don't care".

"But on Monday, when we went to tell the soldiers that we got information that the insurgents would be coming to attack us, they assured us to go back and that they would come to join us in the village. That was why we thought that those that came to attack us were soldiers, because they came in military Hilux and they were all dressed like soldiers. But it turned out that they came out to massacre us."

The source said, "Corpses still litter everywhere in the villages and in the bush; some women whose husbands were killed before their eyes had to return to dig shallow graves to bury their husbands so that their bodies would not be preyed upon by vultures or wild animals. I can confidently tell you that over 300 persons have been killed."

He added: "As we are talking now, some of the escaped villagers who are trapped up in the mountains said they still see the gunmen going about attacking villages and hamlets by setting them on fire.

"More than 1,000 homes in the three villages have been burnt to ashes, and they are still attacking more and more. We are worried if the federal government has forsaken us



Shettima

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