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Cattle Rustlers Kill 40, Injure Many In Zamfara

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A large group of suspected well-armed cattle rustlers Saturday night attacked Cigama and Kokiya communities of Birnin Magaji local government area of Zamfara State, killing over 40 residents and injuring many others. The death toll could rise.

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An eyewitness, Malam Sa'idu Bello, told LEADERSHIP in a phone conversation that heavily armed cattle rustlers, numbering over 50, besieged the community at about 3pm on Saturday and opened fire on anyone in sight.

Bello said the rustlers had on several instances attempted to attack the village but did could not because of the daily patrol by the vigilante group in the area, but they were caught unawares in the weekend attack due to Ramadan.

The rustlers attacked us at a surprise hour when many people, including members of the vigilante groups, were still busy praying in supplication for blessing from the holy Ramadan month," he said.

According to him, the village is now deserted as both men and women had to flee for their safety because "there is no police or any form of security (apparatus) to guarantee security of life and property."

He further reported that after the bloody attack, the rustlers stole a large number of cattle and sheep and easily escaped.

Another eyewitness, Hassan Balarabe, noted that the community was in serious dilemma as families had been separated.

"As I am talking to you now, I don't know the whereabouts of my father, my seven-year-old child and my brother, as everyone took to their heels," he said, even as he expressed fears that the number of casualties might raise to a very alarming figure as dead bodies were still being recovered from surrounding bushes.

The Zamfara State police public relations officer, DSP Sanusi Amiru, said the attack occurred in a very remote area with very difficult terrain, and said a joint team of policemen and military had been deployed to track the culprits and also secure the area.

Amiru declined to give the figure of casualties, but said details will be released after investigation.

