

Concerns Over Renewed Terror Attacks After 2023 Polls

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There is growing anxiety following the recent spike in terror attacks after the 2023 general elections and the cash crunch that destabilised the nation's economy.

While there was relative calm in the build-up to the elections in terms of violent terrorist attacks, it is no longer the case as there have been renewed attacks on hapless communities leading to the death of hundreds of Nigerians including women and children, with Benue communities being the worst hit.

Apa, Agatu, Otukpo and Guma towns account for the majority of the casualties in Benue State.

Reports indicate that Apa Local Government Area alone recorded over 250 deaths while no fewer than 75 persons lost their lives in Otukpo LGA within this period.

Agatu LGA, which used to be the epicentre of herders' incursions in Benue South, recorded minimal attacks with about 30 casualties.

Other places affected include Ikpobi, Odugbo, Ugbobi Akpanta, Ologba, Oyiiji and Imana in Apa LGA. Oshigbudo Atakpa and Okpagabi in Agatu were also not spared.

The Christian Pentecostal Church located at Akenawe, Tswarev in Ukemerbagya/Tswarev Council Ward of Logo local government area was also attacked by the marauders, who killed a worshipper and kidnapped the pastor of the church and others worshippers.

That attack was followed by the murder of the traditional ruler of Ugbobi community in Apa LGA. He was killed alongside several persons.

There was also the invasion of Umogidi village in Enetekpa Adoka District of Otukpo LGA where three persons were initially murdered by the marauders. Shortly after their burial, the invaders staged a comeback to the village, killing 51 persons.

Just when the people were yet to come to terms with the Umogidi massacre, the attackers stormed LGEA Primary School, Mgbam, in Nyiev Council Ward of Guma LGA, where the traditional ruler of the community, who lost two children in the attack, confirmed the death of 37 persons while 37 others including children and women were left with severe injuries.

The clan head of Ucha, Zaki John Akpan, accused government forces deployed in the state of complicity; he specifically accused soldiers of supervising killings of his subjects.

He, therefore, called for the withdrawal of soldiers and deployment of mobile police personnel and Civil defence corps in the area to protect citizens.

"If the government wants to help this nation, the government should withdraw and send soldiers back to the barracks and then deploy Mopol and civil defence," he said, even as he dismissed insinuations that the attacks are fueled by the anti-open grazing law promulgated by the state government in 2017.

"What happened here, people are attributing it to anti-open grazing law but we that are here don't see it as an anti-open grazing law. What is happening in Kaduna, Taraba and other states? What are they saying, but there are also killings there? They say they have deployed security at these places, I'm not challenging them but these

problems are persisting. I wonder why insecurity persists despite the presence of security personnel.

"We'll inform you that this is where those guys (terrorists) are but nothing happens. Armed herders said we are eating their cattle but here in Ngran where they came to kill 37 people, there is no single cattle that anybody touched. Three days before the attack, they came to graze around our houses with their guns. Soldiers will see them with guns but say nothing.

"On the day of election, herders killed 12 persons at Tse Alaar, next day they attacked Yelewata, they later killed somebody at Udei who went to the stream to have his bath. After that they came to Tse Ikoyogen and opened people's houses and brought out yam seedlings for their cattle to eat, same thing happened at Tse-Iho. When we report to soldiers, they will tell us not to disturb the herders, that they will look into it."

He said while the distance between Ngran and Keana is about 50km, there is nobody in the bushes but the land is not enough for the armed herders, adding that they just want to kill everybody in Benue.

"Now for your information, about 50km away from Ngran towards Keana, there is nobody in the bush but they don't graze there. It is here where people ran from them to find safety that they want to come and graze and then accuse us of rustling their cattle."

"I just feel the herders have a different agenda. Talking about anti-open grazing law, nobody has asked herders to leave Benue; the government only asked them to ranch. They have laws in some states that prohibit alcohol and others and people obey. Why can't they obey Benue law? This attack yesterday we recovered 36 bodies while 38 persons were injured. One of the injured persons also gave up, making the figure of casualties 37. They burnt a vehicle and two motorcycles at the district head's compound, burnt a thatched house with yam seedlings and, as they withdrew, they were killing people," he said.

The Director Defence Media Operations, Major General Musa Danmadami, told journalists recently that the spike in kidnapping is traceable to the reversal of the cashless policy and called for an all of society approach to end violent attacks and killings in the country.

"There must be a whole society and government approach. I don't want to say categorically clear but we are all aware that before now, with the cash crunch, if they kidnap anybody and there is no cash to pay, the criminals have to make use of the fact that there is no cash and, unfortunately, with the reversal of the policy- making cash available, the criminals have impetus to do what they are doing, though I know that there are still some elements of cash squeeze going on.

"We are equally faced with that problem of cash crunch; however, I want to assure you that the Military, we are still doing our job, we have not rested. Operation Safe Conduct which was conducted towards the successful conduct of elections to support police and INEC has come and gone, we are all aware that there are still two states where elections are still going to be conducted, so we are still not resting on our oars.

The military is still working round the clock 24/7 to make sure there is



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peace and security in the country. So we'll continue to carry out our responsibility to the best of knowledge while calling on the civil populace to support us."

A public and private security analyst and trainer, Major Banjo Daniel (retired) said the failure of security agencies to end the killings could be down to the body language of the commander-in-chief.

He said it could probably be as a result of the orders they receive that hinders them from attacking the armed herders.

"It is probably the orders they receive. As far as I'm concerned the country is already more like a criminal state; we have accepted criminality of all forms. It didn't just start today; it started long ago.

"Our troops are capable, and I'm still saying that the Army is capable of dealing with any insurgency. If the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya has received instructions to end this terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and others, if he has received such instructions and is sitting there now, then he should go to jail for incompetence, incapacity to perform assigned duties. So I want to believe that he has not received such instructions directly that go and end these killings. I also think the President does not have the will end these killings," he said.

The secretary general, International Institute of Professional Security (IIPS), Dr. Abdullahi Mohammed Jabi, while calling on citizens to be security conscious also called for rejig of security architecture in the state to end senseless killings.

He lamented that it was rather unfortunate that the killings are becoming perpetual and pronounced in Benue.

He said: "Why is Benue the theatre of war? It is like we are running out of strategic thinking and we need to rejig the security architecture and contain the threats, and the citizens must be up and doing. These figures are human beings, the attackers are human beings, they must look at their trade mark; they are not coming in as ghosts, so they must be able to look at their trade mark their activities. Within five days 105 people were killed in different communities in three local government areas, it's unacceptable.

"There may be complacency and conspiracy theory going on there for obvious reasons - of whether the past posture of the governor when he was on the saddle and now that he is about leaving. Nevertheless, the citizens must be security conscious, (the government must) deploy more of security personnel that are not of

the conceptual Fulani or Northern extraction there because if there is a compromise that it is a good number of them at the crime scene, it would be difficult, so if we get other tribes and other professionals there, maybe the narrative will change."

Surviving IDPs Desert Camps In Benue

Meanwhile, surviving Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) at LGED Primary School, Ngran, in Nyiev Council Ward of Guma Local Government Area of Benue State have fled the camp for fear of further attacks.

The council chairman, Mike Uba, who disclosed this to our Correspondent, said although there is relative calm because of the presence of combined security personnel deployed to the area, still all the IDPs have deserted the camp for fear of being attacked again.

"A team of combined security personnel has been deployed to the camp to restore normalcy but as I speak to you now, no single IDP is in the camp. I went there this morning and saw the camp empty and when I inquired, I was told that some went to stay with their relatives and others who had nowhere to go went to Ortese IDP camp."

When asked about the 38 corpses deposited at the mortuary in Daudi, the chairman said all those who were killed in the attack had been buried as directed by the governor, Dr Samuel Ortom.

Also, the chief medical director (CMD) of Benue State University Teaching Hospital (BSUTH), Makurdi, Prof Terrumun Swende, told our correspondent via a telephone conversation that all those who sustained varying degrees of injuries in the attack were responding to treatment, adding that death had been recorded.

Timeline Of Attacks, Killings After 2023 General Elections

Renewed attacks and killings by different terrorist groups in Nigeria have escalated since the February 25 general elections.

Below are some of the timelines of attacks and killings within the last 42 days

March 4: Bandits attack local govt headquarters in Zamfara, kill DPO, 2 others.

Bandits attacked the headquarters of Maru LGA of Zamfara State on Saturday night, March 4, 2023, killing a divisional police officer and two others.

The gunmen who in their numbers stormed Maru, shot sporadically, forcing residents to scamper for safety.

Upon getting the information of the attack, the Divisional Police Officer of the local government, Kazeem Raheem, mobilized his men and some local vigilantes to repel the bandits, however, the DPO, a sergeant named Rabi Gabogiri, and one vigilante official identified as Shehu Chuka were killed in the counter offensive.

March 8: No fewer than 50 persons reportedly abducted by the terrorists

A pregnant woman with five other persons were reportedly murdered by terrorists in the suburbs of Rafi and Wushishi local government areas of Niger State.

Confirming the incident, the State Commissioner for Internal Security and Humanitarian Affairs, Mr

Emmanuel Umar, said the government was yet to ascertain the details of the attack.

March 8: Borno State Police command confirm the killing of 29 fishermen by Boko Haram terrorists in the state.

The attack, which took place at Mukdolo village in the Gamborin Ngala area of the state, also left nine other fishermen with critical injuries.

The state police public relations officer, Sani Kamilu, who confirmed the report, said the incident happened on Wednesday, March 8, 2023.

March 12: Suspected herdsman invade six communities in the Kwande, Benue State, and kill no fewer than 50 persons.

The affected communities in the four-day attack are Adam, Iyarinwa, Abamde Iyuluy, Waya Boagundu, Agura Ayaga and Azege areas in Turan Council Ward, Kwande LGA.

The former chairman of the Council Tertua Yarkbewan, who confirmed the casualty figures, said the death toll could be more.

March 15-17: Fresh attack on Niger communities leaves four soldiers, six others killed by bandits.

Bandits again launched a fresh attack on some communities in Niger State, killing 11 people, including a Major in the Nigerian Army and three other soldiers.

Also, six local vigilante members in the affected communities were killed by the bandits.

The gunmen had killed the deceased within two days and abducted no fewer than 60 villagers during the invasion.

March 24: Armed herdsman attack Ondo community, abduct residents, brutalise others.

Gun-wielding herdsman attacked the Ogbese community in Ondo State, during which several residents were kidnapped while others were badly injured.

The incident, which occurred on Friday, March 24, left the entire town in fear and anxiety as the families of abducted victims waited to hear from the kidnappers.

Eyewitnesses said the herdsman used machetes to hack other residents during the violent attack.

April 2: 4 killed as IPOB, Police clash in Aba

A clash between the Nigeria Police Force and the members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) left over four IPOB members dead.

The police claimed that the IPOB members attacked their men on a confidence building patrol/show of force in the Aba metropolis.

April 4: Boko Haram terrorists kill Pastor, injure wife, others in Borno village.

Armed Boko Haram terrorists on Tuesday evening invaded Mathlaw village of Biu local government area of Borno state and shot dead a pastor (name withheld) who was in charge of Church of Brethren in Nigeria, also known as EYN Church in Hausa parlance.

The insurgents, according to reliable sources, also shot and injured the wife of the pastor who is currently receiving treatment at an undisclosed Hospital.

April 5: Herdsman attack bus, kill passenger, abduct 8 others in Delta

Gunmen, suspected to be herdsman, attacked a Toyota Sienna bus, killing one passenger and abducting eight others between Ndemili and Oliogo communities, Ndokwa West local government area, Delta State.

It was gathered that the vehicle was conveying the passengers from Onitsha, Anambra State on Wednesday, April 5, when it was ambushed at about 5pm by the hoodlums.

A source said the deceased passenger was shot dead on the spot while others were whisked into the bush by their abductors.