

## Senator, 103 Others Die In Plateau Bloodbath

July 9, 2012 1:20 AM

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IT was a terrible, but necessary task – the mass burial of villagers killed by yet unknown gunmen in a weekend of blood and bullets.

Among the dead in the **Plateau** State community were children and women. But, unknown to the mourners, the attackers were yet to call it a day.

As the bodies were lowered into the graves, it began to rain bullets. The attackers were back. There was stampede.

By the time the swirling smoke from the assailants' guns disappeared, many lay dead. Among them was Senator Gyang Daylop Dantong, who represented Plateau North District.

Also shot dead was the Majority Leader of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Hon. Gyang Fulani (Barkin Ladi Constituency).

Barkin Ladi Local Government Chairman Emmanuel Loman and a member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Simon Mwadkwon, were lucky. Mwadkwon was injured.

The number of those killed during the attack on mourners at the mass burial site was put at 20.

The deceased and hundreds of others were attending the mass burial in Maseh village, Riyom Local Government Area, for 64 victims of the weekend attack on Plateau villages by people believed to be Fulani herdsmen. The dead were either burnt or shot.

Ten villages – nine in Barkin Ladi Local Government and one in Riyom – were attacked on Saturday night. In all, about 104 died.

Hon Mwadkwon, the House of Representatives member representing Riyom/Barkin Ladi Federal Constituency, was taken to the hospital – unconscious. He regained consciousness hours later.

"Senator Gyang Dantong and the Majority Leader of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Gyang Fulani, were attacked and killed by Fulani shepherds," State government spokesman Pam Ayuba said.

A senior legislative aide to Senator Dantong, Hon Dan Majang, confirmed the death of his boss.

Mr. Ruwang Dantong, the brother of the senator, told News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the senator died after seeing the dead bodies of his kinsmen killed in an attack on Kakuruk village in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area.

Ruwang also confirmed the death of Assemblyman Gyang Filani.

Ruwang said both representatives were at the scene of the attack carried out between Friday and Saturday when they started hearing gunshots from another set of attackers.

Shocked by the situation, the duo collapsed and were taken to Barkin Ladi General Hospital where they were pronounced dead, he said..

When NAN visited the Rayfield home of the late senator, relatives and well wishers were in shock. Many were wailing.

An eye witness said: "The Chairman of Barkin Ladi, Hon Loman, escaped the attack because he



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left in an advance party to the next site of mass burial. It was at the end of the mass burial when people were about to depart that the gunmen struck, opening fire on sympathisers.

Gunmen, who divided themselves into five groups, attacked 10 villages, killing mostly women and children on Saturday night.

Some of the villages invaded are [Kakuruk](#), [Kuzen](#), [Ngwo](#), [Kogoduk](#), [Ruk](#), [Dogo](#) and [Nyar](#).

Eyewitnesses said the gunmen were dressed in bullet-proof vests and military camouflage.

Plateau State has been a flashpoint of perennial ethnic crises.

The Special task Force (STF) in Jos, "Operation Safe Haven", [said its men killed 21 of the](#) gunmen who launched the Saturday attacks.

The STF, in a statement by its media officer Captain Salisu Mustapha, said it lost two of its men to the attackers during a gun duel that lasted over three hours.

Sources said the death toll from the scene of the attacks was over 100.

Hon Fulani, before he was killed yesterday, said: "The figure we gave you yesterday was underestimated; it was far above that. In fact in Maseh village, we came there this morning (Sunday) to discover over 50 bodies burnt in one building. Besides, bodies littered Maseh village.

It was gathered that over 50 people, mostly women and children who ran to a pastor's residence for cover, were traced there by the attackers and the house was set ablaze, killing everybody inside. The family of the pastor of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), Maseh, including his wife and three children, were among the victims.

Plateau State Commissioner for Information Yiljap Abraham said: "This is one of the blackest spots in the history of man, one of the saddest moments in the history of Nigeria, an incomparably sad day in our lives as Plateau people."

The affected villages held mass burial for victims so as to clear the bodies littering the environment. The mass burials were held in two villages of Barkin Ladi; Fwai (30 bodies) and Kakuruk (12 bodies). In Maseh, Riyom Local Government, 62 bodies were buried.

A village head of Maseh said, "The mass burial became the best option as there are no enough mortuaries in the hospitals in the state to accommodate the bodies."

The mass burial was originally slated for 10am yesterday, but it was shifted as more bodies were being recovered from the bush by a rescue team.

The STF said: "The attackers, who were heavily armed with different assault rifles and some of them dressed in camouflage/MOPOL uniform with bullet proof vests, killed about 14 locals and burnt several houses. STF personnel went to the scene to bring the situation under control, but the gunmen engaged them in a gun duel that lasted several hours.

"In the process, the attackers killed two of our men, but we killed [21](#) of the assailants. One arrest was made and some weapons and ammunitions recovered by our men.

"The situation was, however, brought under control by men of the STF and the area secured."

The chairman of Barkin Ladi Local Government where nine villages were attacked, Hon. Emmanuel Loman, disputed the claim that normalcy had been restored to the area. He said: "In fact, while we were conducting the mass burial in Maseh village, the gunmen were still shooting from behind the hills and rocks."

Loman said: "The challenge now is that of adequate security. The security men available are not enough to secure the villages and the gunmen are still lurking around.

"I am pleading with the Force Headquarters and Defence Headquarters to intervene now. Over a hundred have been killed and the gunmen are still threatening to kill more. This is a clear case of genocide and ethnic cleansing."

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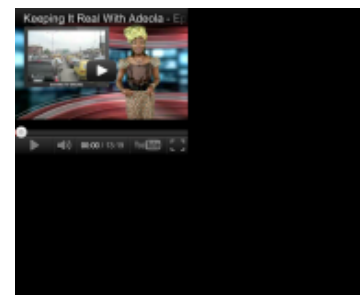
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**Dr. Rash** July 9, 2012 at 2:26 AM

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Jesus! Save your own. Lord You have kept quite for too long. How long will You allow these to continue? oh God please save your people. They have no defender, they have run to You in Rehoboth. Please do not cast them away.

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