

# Kaduna villagers to Buhari: save us

•We counted 51 bodies •El-Rufai promises death for bandits •Presidency: Govt'll sustain offensive against bandits

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## ***AbdulGafar Alabelewe, Kaduna***

RESIDENTS of six villages attacked at the weekend by suspected Boko Haram terrorists on Monday recounted their ordeal and cried out to President Muhammadu Buhari to save them.

The villagers said they counted between 50 and 51 bodies after the mayhem.

Some of the bodies, according to the residents, were burnt by the insurgents, who accused the villagers of providing security agents with information

Four houses and six vehicles were also destroyed in the attack that affected Kerawa, Rago, Marina, Zariyawa, Hashimawa, and Unguwar Barau in Igabi Local Government Area.

Governor Nasir El-Rufai and security chiefs visited the communities on Monday. El-Rufai did not hide his anger over the killings. He declared that it was “our duty” to send the terrorists to “their maker.” He apologised to them for his administration’s inability to protect them.

A resident of one of the villages, who spoke for them, described the attack as “unprecedented and horrific.”

He said: “We have over 50 dead right now. We are yet to bury them. It will take hours to bury them.

“We are appealing to the Federal Government to please, pay attention to the situation in Igabi LGA, especially Igabi West. President Buhari should come to our rescue. Please deploy security agents that can do this work, those earlier stationed here never stayed.

“We know we will all die one day and return to Almighty Allah. Even the bandits were saying so. Therefore, the government should fear Allah. We are in a terrible situation.

“If we start the funeral now, we will not finish it till midnight. These killers are not just bandits, they are Boko Haram, they did not steal anything; they just killed and burnt our belongings.”

Another villager said the bandits had accused them of reporting their activities to security forces who, recently bombarded their camps in neighboring Birnin-Gwari LGA.

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He said: “If you remember, a few weeks ago, policemen raided the bandits’ camp and killed many of them. Soldiers and Air Force men also attacked the bandits a few days ago and killed many of them.

“So, these bandits believe we are the ones giving the security operatives information about their movement and camps.

“Some of us who escaped from the attackers said the bandits were saying it in Hausa language that, the villagers were the ones reporting them to the security agents.

“We have actually been suffering in the hands of the bandits for a long time. They invade our villages and kidnap people unchallenged. That is why we became the first suspects of the bandits.”

The Hausa Service of the Voice of America (VOA) quoted another resident as saying that while the attack was on, a plane believed to be on reconnaissance duty flew past as if it was “going to Makkah.”

He said: “What happened was unprecedented. We have never seen such kind of horror in our lives. These killers are Boko Haram. They stormed our village killing indiscriminately, they spared nobody, the young, the old, even Almajiris were not spared.

“They continued to shoot people, setting fire on the dead and property. It was extremely horrific. They went from room to room killing; a man and his children were killed, even new babies.

During his visit to Karewa and four other villages affected by the mayhem, Governor El-Rufai apologised for his administration’s inability to protect the people.

He said save for the intervention of security agents, the villages would have been completely destroyed.

The governor, who ruled out amnesty for the bandits, said: “If not for the security agencies prompt intervention, they would have wiped out the villages.

“I also came to apologise for our failure to protect you fully, we are doing our best to minimise such incidents, you should continue to forgive us.

“But we are doing the best we can and we are hoping that this banditry issue will be addressed because security personnel are on ground to manage the situation.

“In Kaduna we have a vast land, if the security agents close one area, they attack another area.

“But it is our duty to wipe them out and until we send them to their maker, the security agencies are taking the war to the forest and we are eliminating them gradually.

“The security agencies are doing the best they can, but they find it difficult to get to remote areas in good time due to poor access roads. The natives on the other hand also find it difficult to get to the security personnel due to poor GSM network.

“But I am grateful to the Air force, Army, Police and the DSS for being always prompt otherwise it would have been worse.”

He urged the people to continue to be patient, vigilant and support the government in its efforts to win the war against the bandits.

El-Rufai prayed for those who died and directed the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) to provide relief materials for the victims.

The governor was accompanied on the visit by the GOC, 1st Division, Director the DSS and Chairmen of Igabi and Giwa LGAs.

The Senator representing Kaduna Central, Mallam Uba Sani described the Sunday killings as merciless .

Sani, in a statement said, “cold blooded murder of about 51 persons in Kaduna villages has further deepened the pain of Nigerians and reinforced the imperative and urgency of reinvigorating the security architecture in the country.”