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•THREE TRAVELLERS KILLED IN EKITI, ONE POLICEMAN STABBED TO DEATH IN OYO

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Tension is building in parts of the South West over fresh killings and abductions allegedly by Fulani herdsmen in Ekiti and Oyo states.

Three persons were killed and over twenty kidnapped by Ak-47 wielding herdsmen who unleashed terror on travellers on a road between Osun and Ekiti states in the last one week.

Also, a policeman was reportedly stabbed to death at a community in Oke Ogun area of Oyo State on Wednesday by a Fulani man.

However, Ekiti State Police command, while confirming the incidents, announced that apart from the killings, it had rescued no fewer than 20 kidnap victims in a forest between Iwaraja in Osun State and Efon Alaaye in Ekiti State, and that they were working round the clock to apprehend the killer herdsmen.

Some commercial drivers plying the road, which is the main route from Ado Ekiti, the Ekiti State capital to Ibadan, Lagos and other destinations, informed Saturday Tribune that the attack at the Iwaraja – Efon road occurred some days ago and that two women and a man were shot dead by bandits who were clearly heard speaking Fulfude.

The drivers claimed that it took the intervention of soldiers from a military checkpoint at nearby Itawure to dislodge the criminals, saying that the herdsmen seized the road for over an hour, an act which forced vehicles off the road while the operation lasted.

They also said that of the three people who lost their lives in the attack, two of the victims were travelling in a commercial bus while the third victim was said to be travelling in a private car.

One of the commercial drivers, who demanded anonymity, claimed in an interaction with Saturday Tribune that he was among those who were help



up while the attack lasted, saying he was travelling from Ado Ekiti to Ibadan on the fateful evening.

“The length of vehicles on the queue waiting for the operation to end was building, and we were helpless. What we learnt was that the criminals had taken over the road and no one dared to verify what was going on. For about one hour, we were there and in very obvious apprehension and fear,” he said.

He added that “those coming from Efon and those of us from Ado were all held up. But after some time, just two soldiers moved in and soon vehicles were free to move again.” But by then, “three people had been shot dead and the attackers had fled into the forest,” he lamented.

A relative of one of the victims, Dr Femi Olugboji, later took to the social media to lament the loss of his younger brother in the incident. Dr Olugboji wrote: “The Olugboji family of Ise-Ekiti lost one of us, Seye Olugboji (48) to armed bandits on Friday 25th May, around Efon Alaaye on his way to Ibadan. His purse containing over N10,000 and a few dollars and his phone and other luggage were intact.

“Two other women equally lost their lives to the same bandits. The following day, Saturday, a man was kidnapped at the same spot. They are demanding for ransom.

“Seye was buried on Monday 28th May, to let you know that it is true. For those that pass through safely, just know that it is by grace. May we not travel on the day the armed bandits are blood thirsty.”

Dr Olugboji, on Thursday, narrated his experience to Saturday Tribune: “On Friday last week, I received a call from a distant cousin by name Tope Adewole, he said my younger brother, who was travelling from Ado Ekiti to Ibadan could not be reached on the telephone, that he had been trying to reach him



unsuccessfully until late in the night when somebody picked the call. The person identified himself as a police officer from Efon Alaaye division.

“Apart from that, we were unable to get any further information concerning him, and we were all in distress, wondering what could be wrong. So we couldn’t really get details until one of our elder brothers, a Reverend in the Anglican Church, gave us details that he was attacked by Fulani herdsmen. But we were not sure what had befallen our brother. We thought he could be in the hospital. We



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to know that he was travelling in a commercial bus. He was said to have sat in one of the front seats; that there was a lady in the middle and then the driver of the bus. So, there were three of them in the front of the vehicle. As they were approaching Iwaraja, between Efon and Iwaraja, they found that a car had been attacked by the Fulani people and that there was a woman inside with her children. They said that the woman was on her way to Ibadan also, doing her PhD — and I believe that she was going for her PhD exams, which was scheduled for last Monday. Those people had already killed the woman by shooting her in the head in the presence of her children. There was blood all over the vehicle.

“They said as soon as the driver conveying my brother and the others saw what happened he attempted to make a U-turn, so in the process, the bandits shot at their vehicle. It was these bullets that killed the lady that was seated in the middle at the front as well as my younger brother. They both died on the spot. So, that very day, three people died: My brother, that woman that was with him in the bus and the other woman travelling with her



children. I learnt nothing was done to the children, but they killed that woman, probably it was in an attempt to kidnap her, I wouldn't know.

When I got to Ado Ekiti to join the wife of my brother, I was told that that same afternoon, these same set of Fulani killers, I won't call them herdsmen, I call them killers, had earlier kidnapped somebody in the area.

"My brother was a civil servant with the Ekiti State Civil Service. He was married for about seven years now, but had not been blessed with a child. He was still waiting and that's part of the pain we are experiencing. He would have been 49 in October, and you can imagine the pain, the experience of losing such a promising young man.

"On Sunday, when I was going to Ado Ekiti, I noticed checkpoints. There was a particular one manned by soldiers at Itawure. Apart from that one, there's another one manned by heavily-armed policemen. Then there were two others manned by regular policemen. The question now is: with all these checkpoints of military and other security personnel, how come all these have been happening because we learnt that on Monday, there was yet another attack and people were said to have been killed. This tells me that something is wrong.

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"We heard a rumour while in Ado Ekiti that some Fulani people had allegedly been perpetrating some crimes around that area of Ekiti State. Three of the criminals were said to have been arrested and that they are currently being detained at Ado Ekiti prison. The rumours also had it that some other Fulani people brought money and asked that their kinsmen being detained should be released, but that the offer was rejected. They were said to have been told that these people committed a



crime and that that was why they were being detained in accordance with the law. I was told that after their offer was rejected, the Fulani people vowed that they were going to retaliate and that people would suffer for their brothers being detained. There are rumours that that was why there had been these crimes around that area. I cannot authenticate the rumour, but I think it is a line of thinking that should be explored by the relevant security agencies in the state and all well-meaning people.

"I will want the Ekiti State government and the Federal Government to do something about that part of the state and the occurrences there. I say this because we might think it's not a problem but that's how Boko Haram started. We hear of incidents involving herdsmen in parts of the South West, and this means that these people are all over the place. Something must be done," he said.

The Ekiti State Police Command, while confirming that activities of the herdsmen in the area were worrisome, said the command was not folding its arms, and that a lot had already been done to bring the perpetrators to book.

The Public Relations Officer of the command, Mr. Caleb Chukwuemeka, who spoke on the incident, confirmed that the incident at Iwaraja – Efon road, in the evening of Friday, 26th May was reported to the command.

Chukwuemeka said the bandits "emerged from the bush and shot indiscriminately and in the process, three people were killed, including a student."

The Ekiti PPRO added that when the reports reached the police, their personnel moved in and engaged them. "In the exchange of gunfire, they saw superior fire power and they took to their heels into the bush. We combed the bush and eventually, we found that they had kidnapped people and we freed them. There were about 20 of the kidnap victims that were freed and some of them had been



at the police command headquarters to make statements.”

Chukwuemeka said a Surveillance Unit, operatives of Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), Operation Flush, personnel from 33PMF and Safer Highways had been deployed on the road in a combined operation “and they are on ground now.”

Chukwuemeka allayed the fears of the people, saying that there was more security presence on the road now to ensure safety of all and sundry, including the road users.

The police spokesman said “we need credible information from the public. There has been a mop up of firearms, but we still need the cooperation of the people with regards to useful information. The police cannot be everywhere, but the people are everywhere, so we need the help of the people. They can reach us on our Control Room hotline 08062335577.”

On whether any arrest had been made, the Ekiti PPRO said “the bandits operate in a peculiar way, they hit and run. That’s their style. So, for now we are still trailing them. Nobody will get away with crime.”

Speaking on possible cooperation with the soldiers at the military checkpoint in the area, he said there was cooperation and explained that the police and other security agencies share information and useful intelligence and added that “the overall aim is to make our communities and country safer for all.”

Policeman stabbed to death in Oyo

A police officer attached to the Oyo State police command in Otu, Itesiwaju Local Government Area, was on Wednesday stabbed to death in Inayin, a



community between Itesiwaju and Iwajowa local government areas.

Competent sources informed Saturday Tribune that the police officer, who was simply identified as Timothy but was popularly known as Jejelaye, was killed while on a surveillance duty in the community.

According to the sources, Timothy and three other colleagues had mounted the stakeout based on a tip-off that some Fulani herdsmen in the area were trading in illegal drugs, especially tramadol.

It was gathered that the four-man police surveillance team had swooped on the suspects when their plan went awry.

Timothy had got hold of one of the suspects and was struggling to secure his arrest when the suspect stabbed him in the stomach and escaped, leaving him in a pool of his own blood.

His colleagues who were attracted by his cries, according to the sources, rushed to the scene and found that the weapon, a machete, had been left in his stomach.

No arrest was eventually made at the scene but the fleeing suspects left two motorcycles behind, which were taken to the police station.

When contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Adekunle Ajisebutu, a Superintendent of Police, confirmed the incident but said the details of the matter were not available to him yet.

Timothy's father was said to have retired from the police force only last month in the same local government, in Komu village.

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