

## NEWS

# How gunmen broke into Oyo prison, killed soldier, Amotekun personnel

•837 inmates freed, 262 recaptured, 575 at large •Prison built in 2007 with 160 inmates capacity, but houses 907

•Incident shows Buhari's ineffectiveness —Adebajo •Attack, national embarrassment —Gani Adams

From Oluwatoyin Mallik, Seyi Sokoya and Bola Badmus

**A** soldier, who was a corporal, and an operative of Oyo State Security Network Agency (Amotekun) were killed on Friday night and several other security operatives were injured, when yet-to-be-identified armed men stormed a medium prison in Abolongo, Oyo town at about 10pm.

Residents of the communities that surrounded the correctional centre in Oyo town were put in panic mode till the wee hours of Saturday, even as many scamped to safety when heavy gunshots rent the air. A resident, Mrs Aderanti Folasade, told Sunday Tribune that the incident was a rude shock as the people in the area had never experienced such.

"We never pray for such again because the resonance of the gun duel was so terrifying and people were running helter-skelter for safety before we were got to know it was the prison that was under attack."

Another eyewitness, who pleaded anonymity, told Sunday Tribune that people of the neighborhood initially mistook the booming sound for the blast of rocks at an ongoing bridge construction around the area.

He said the sound became scarier as it intensified, leading to tension in the area.

The prison and its environs were heavily secured when Sunday Tribune visited the scene. No official of the prison was ready to speak about the in attack.

Sunday Tribune, however, gathered that the officials of Amotekun in the early hours of Saturday morning had raided the communities around the prison and had arrested about 12 persons in the mission to recover some of the inmates.

One of the arrested persons, Ibrahim Alaka, who was mistaken for one of the fleeing inmates, but was later released, narrated his ordeal.

"I was handpicked innocently on my way to work on Saturday morning. I was accused of attacking the prison. I told them I was only going to work. I handle sewage disposal, but they asked me to follow them. Others were arrested before me. I was arrested at Afifititi river bank. I live in Aawe," he said.

Alaka explained that some

other innocent people, numbering about 11, who were similarly arrested by security operatives, were also released.

"I am also an indigene of Oyo. It is unfortunate that I was not aware of the incident before I was wrongly arrested. I cannot thank God enough that I was released later in the evening. I am aware that about 11 people were arrested and I was the 12th person released."

"I was reluctant to leave my house this morning. My phones were collected and the N300 I had on me. I explained that I was only going to work, but they said I should still follow them. I was beaten and manhandled, despite the fact that I told them that I am a waste collector," he lamented.

The Oyo Command's Controller of Corrections Service, Noel Ailewon, has, however, promised that the command would do its best to get fleeing prisoners and bring them back to the facility.

The Controller made the promise when he led his team to the correctional facility in Oyo town early on Saturday to assess the level of damage.

Sunday Tribune learnt that the gunmen, whose number had yet to be ascertained, broke into the prison, using sophisticated weapons, grenades and dynamite to blast the wall in order to gain entry, and had a fierce encounter with the with officers on guard.

They thereafter set free all the inmates numbering 837.

It was further gathered that the Amotekun operative and soldier were killed in an ambush by the armed men while going in a convoy in response to a distress call.

When contacted, the command's Public Relations Officer of the command Olanrewaju Anjorin, explained that the cause of the attacks had yet to be ascertained.

However, Anjorin said that a total of 262 of the escapees had been recaptured, with 575 still at large.

He said that during the attack by the invaders, all the awaiting trial detainees were forced out of custody, but the cells housing the convicts and the female inmates were not vandalised.

"Following the directives of the Controller-General of Corrections, Haliru Nababa, the state Controller, Noel Ailewon, has commenced the process of 'search and

recapture' after visiting the scene of the incident.

"He assured that no effort will be spared to recapture the fleeing inmates, even as he solicited credible intelligence to aid security agencies in tracking down the fugitives."

The PRO said that security had been beefed up in and around the town.

"Our men are stationed across Oyo town to note strange faces and question such. If an escapee is among the people, such will be returned to the correctional facility," he stated.

He added that calmness had been restored in the town, with the residents returning to their normal daily activities.

Anjorin urged people to report any suspicious person to security agencies to rid the state of criminal activities.

Also speaking in a telephone interview, the Commandant of the Oyo State Security Network Agency (Amotekun Corps), Colonel Olayinka Olayanju (retd) confirmed the death of one of the Corps' officers, with a female and three others injured.

He gave the name of the deceased as Sodiq Babatunde, saying that he was hit in the spine.

He added that the female operative sustained head injury and was in the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, while several others were also injured.

Olayanju, however, said that about 30 of the fleeing inmates were arrested at different locations by Amotekun operatives in the early hours of Saturday.

The Deputy Director of Army Public Relations in 2 Division of the Nigerian Army, Major Iweha, also confirmed the death of a soldier, but said that army remained undeterred in joining the custodial centre in recapturing fleeing inmates.

The Public Relations Officer of UCH, Mr Toye Akinrinlola, confirmed the admission of the female Amotekun officer in the hospital.

Akinrinlola said that patient had been moved from the resuscitation room into a cubicle in the accident and emergency ward, adding that she had become stable.

Oyo Custodial Centre was established in 2007 with a capacity of 160 inmates but at the time of the attack, according to the PRO, it had a total population of 907.

Of the number, awaiting trial persons were 837, representing 92 per cent, with just 64 convicts.

## FG reacts, assures residents of safety

Meanwhile, the Federal Government, through the Minister of Interior, Mr Rauf Aregbesola has asked members of the public to go about their normal businesses, as the situation had been put in control.

Aregbesola, in a statement made available to the media on Saturday by his media aide, Sola Fasure, said: "Armed squad unit members of the Nigerian Correctional Service and other security agencies on guard at the facility engaged the attackers in a gun duel that lasted for 20 minutes before they were overpowered."

"The attackers subsequently used grenades and other explosives to gain access into the awaiting trial section of the facility and set free many of the awaiting trial inmates. Other sections of the facilities were left untouched."

"The Controller General of the Nigerian Correctional Service has been on the situation immediately the incident occurred," said the aide who added that the minister's had been briefed on the attack and was monitoring the situation.

"He (Aregbesola) also requires members of the public to report any suspicious movement or any sign of the escaped inmates and the gunmen around the vicinity to the nearest security post around them."

"Security agencies are on the trail of the escaped inmates, while a joint security services manhunt has been launched immediately for the apprehension of the assailants."

"This has led to the capture of some of the inmates while others returned voluntarily. However, those who are on the run are advised to turn themselves in, as escape from lawful custody is a serious offence. The full weight of the law will be brought on them when arrested," the statement said.

## Attack shows Buhari's ineffectiveness —Ayo Adebajo

Acting leader of pan-Yoruba sociopolitical group, Afenifere, Chief Ayo Adebajo, has said that the attack by bandits on Oyo prison showed the ineffectiveness of President Muhammadu

Buhari as the Chief Security Officer of the country.

Chief Adebajo said Buhari has lost control of the situation and should leave.

"That (incident) shows the ineffectiveness of our Chief Security Officer under his regime. The man has lost control and that is what you people, both APC, PDP all other losers don't agree to. You are all living in denial. He should leave that place."

"My own suggestion now is that if he loves this country, he should set up a National Government to implement restructuring immediately before talking about any election. He has no clue to our problem. The security of the country is deteriorating daily," Adebajo said.

"So my reaction is that people of good will should put pressure on General Muhammadu Buhari to form a National Government now to set in motion process of restructuring the country to federalism before talking of any election," he added.

The elder statesman, while noting the far deteriorating security situation in the country currently, said that the latest incident in Oyo might be a ploy "to cause crisis in the South-West to be able to say oh, law and order has broken down throughout the country in order to prolong his tenure."

Speaking further on the suggested National Government, Chief Adebajo said President Buhari would remain as Head of government, while every political party, among others would be part of the government, with the sole aim of implementing restructuring immediately so that there would be peace in the country.

He, however, called on the president to set free the Yoruba Nation agitator, Chief Sunday Adeyemo aka Igboho; the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) leader, Nnamdi Kanu, and other agitators, to be able to attain peace in the country and allow the government to identify and subdue the real terrorists in Nigeria.

"All the agitations will come down, and he should release Igboho and all these people to have peace to be able to attack those who really are terrorists. Even though el-Rufai had told him to do so, and others have told him to do so," he said.

## Oyo prison attack embarrassing —Gani Adams

Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland, Iba Gani Adams, has condemned the attack, describing it as a national embarrassment.

In a statement by his Special Assistant on Media, Mr Kehinde Aderemi, he said the invasion of the prison by bandits had exposed the poor security situation in the country.

This was just as the Yoruba generalissimo, who noted that Oyo State and the entire South-West had never experienced such jailbreak in very long time, said it was unfortunate that insecurity had triggered various types of menace across the country.

Adams, however, blamed the Oyo State security service for its failure to beef up the security in the prison, noting further that there was no doubt that the bandits were playing out a script that would later engulf the entire nation, following the attack on the Abuja-bound train.

"Following the attack on the Abuja-bound train, and the Oyo prison attack, it is certainly no doubt that the bandits are playing out a script that will later engulf the entire nation," Iba Adams said.

Adams, while expressing his concern to the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi and the state government, said it was indeed very ridiculous to hear such news coming from the ancient town, calling on the Inspector-General of Police, Usman Alkali Baba, to look into the security situation and address the problem in the most professional manner.

According to him, the IG should do this because Oyo State is very sensitive to the South-West, saying the people of the zone cannot continue to live in fear.

Iba Adams, however, restated his belief in regionalism, saying the best solution to the myriads of problems confronting the nation was to allow each component of the federating units to control the security architectures of their respective region as it was specified in the 1963 constitution.

He argued that the idea of using only one police structure was archaic, saying that a country with over 200 million population, and over 300 ethnic nationalities cannot thrive and prosper under deceit and acrimony.