

# Bloody Xmas: Tears as Southern Kaduna communities bury terror victims

The reported killings of over 38 people in separate attacks on Malagum 1 and Sokwong villages in Kaura Local Government of Kaduna State, have thrown the state into yet another round of mourning. MUHAMMAD SABIU, in this piece, reports the general mood of the state as the terror victims are given a mass burial



Caskets being conveyed to the burial site

**F**OR several months, the people of Southern Kaduna and environs enjoyed relative peace. The confirmation was revealed by the Kaduna State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan last week, in an interview. According to him, the relative peace was possible because of the concerted efforts put in place by both the federal and state governments to end the insecurity bedeviling the state as well as other parts of the country.

Collaborating his view, a security expert, Abubakar Musa also affirmed that the propensity and intensity put in place by the security forces to flush out the bandits and terrorists was commendable, saying, "for the first time, we saw a determined military and security agencies who performed well since the presidential order was given to them to end the menace following facing the country by 31st, December, 2022."

Investigations by Nigerian Tribune revealed that since the military onslaught began in the troubled states, it gave hope to the citizens. Many bandit commanders were killed including hundreds of bandits in different locations.

However, it was gathered that few days to the expiration of the presidential order, the bandits struck in two communities of Southern Kaduna. The attacks which simultaneously occurred in Malagum and Sokwong communities in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, led to the gruesome murder of 40 people, while over 102 houses were burnt and destroyed.

Findings by the Nigerian Tribune further

revealed that hundreds of the residents in the two communities fled the troubled locations to neighbouring towns and villages. The two communities, it was learnt, are now a shadow of themselves following the mass exodus of the natives.

## Reprisal

The mayhem according to a military source occurred as a result of the killings of some people on December 13, 2022, saying, "It was the December 13th attack that led to the Sunday, 18th December attack on the two villages."

According to source, "we have been holding series of meetings on the negative effects of reprisals. We have maintained that reprisals will never lead us to peace but destruction."

It will be recalled also that in the same Malagum on 26th September, 2021, the people of Madamai and Abun communities were attacked after an earlier attack on 15th August, 2021. It was gathered that following

those attacks, 43 people were killed.

## How they were attacked

Narrating the attack on his community, a survivor of the December 18th attack, Daniel Ayuba told the Nigerian Tribune said the attackers stormed their community on Sunday night around 9pm when most of the villagers had retired for the night in their homes.

"Then all of a sudden, we began to hear gunshots. The hoodlums who stormed our community were holding AK 47 rifles and started moving from house to house shooting and slaughtering our people at will. For several hours, they were inflicting and unleashing terror on the communities without help until around 11pm when security agencies came to chase them out.

We ran for safety inside the bush. Leaving behind our grains and foodstuff which we later learnt was burnt by the criminals."

He told the Nigerian Tribune that one of the most gruesome murders were the killing of six members of the same family, saying,

"the father and mother including their four children were completely wiped out."

## SOKAPU, CAN condemn killings

Piqued by the latest development, the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) condemned the act, describing it as "senseless and wicked." While SOKAPU called on the natives to defend their communities, CAN called on the Federal Government to fish out the killers, saying they should not go unpunished.

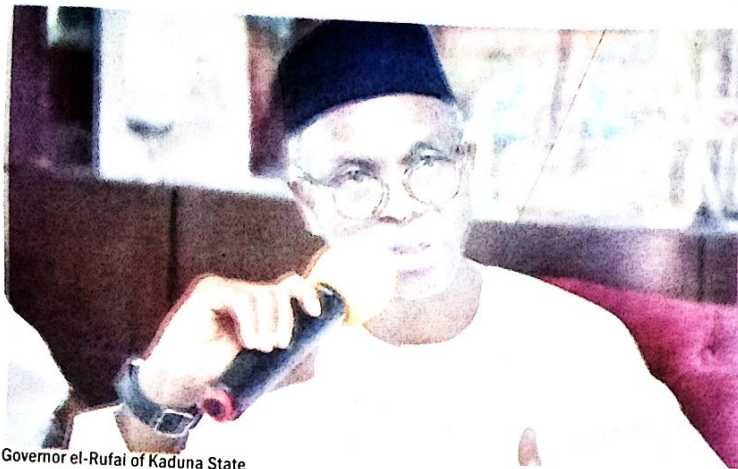
Apart from condemnations from the unions, political parties too have expressed their sadness over the latest mayhem in the two communities. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar paid an unscheduled visit 24 hours after the mayhem to the chief of Kagoro. At the palace of the traditional ruler, Atiku who described the action as regrettable said the security architecture had to be reviewed and restructured. He promised to decentralize the police by creating community police as well as state police.

Governor Nasir El-rufai who was represented by the deputy governor, Hajiya Hadiza Balarabe, also at the palace, while condemning the killings, reminded the citizens of the state that this was the season of peace and love. El-rufai said people should know and understand that human beings are one. He also kicked against the renewed violence in the community, urging the residents of the area to embrace each other.



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## "These killings must stop"



Governor el-Rufai of Kaduna State



IGP Baba Alkali



Mourners at the burial programme

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In the same vein, APC campaign council also suspended its townhall meeting in Southern Kaduna as a mark of respect to the slain victims. In a statement issued by its Director General, Professor Muhammad Sani Bello, on behalf of the gubernatorial candidate, Senator Uba Sani, described the killings as shocking and unfortunate.

"The unfortunate attack which is coming on the heels of relative peace in Kaduna State, following ariel bombardment by the Nigerian Air Force and attacks by ground troops, has thrown Kaura Area Council, Kaduna State and the entire country into mourning over the loss of lives and properties.

"As a mark of respect to the souls of the deceased, and in mourning with the families of the bereaved, the Kaduna State APC Campaign Council has suspended its Town Hall Meeting which was scheduled to hold."

Similarly, the PDP gubernatorial candidate, Isa Ashiru also condemned the renewed killings and insisted that the security and welfare of the people should not be taken for granted. While consoling the people of the area, he assured them that if elected he would ensure that this carnage is tackled once and for all.

Jonathan Asake, the Labour Party gubernatorial candidate, while condemning the murder of the natives called on the people especially the youths to defend their territories. He said the people of Southern Kaduna have continued to be the prey, asking when would the mayhem against the people of the area end. He noted that the recent attack

was a deliberate attempt to install fear on the residents so that they will not come out to vote in the forthcoming election slated for February 2023.

Barely four days after the carnage, December 22, 2022, the bodies of the 40 slain natives were committed to the earth amidst tears. Mourners, as early as 7am, from the neighbouring villages came for the mass burial. The mourners included the clergy, women, youths, and government officials.

The interdenominational service started with a sermon delivered by Reverend Father Benjamin Bala. He set the ball rolling by declaring that "as we mourn our losses, we ask God to grant his consolation and healing to the immediate members of the families who were affected directly, and indeed, all of us, who are anguished by this sad situation. What has happened to us is indeed very painful. However, we call to mind St. Paul's exhortation that we must not weep as the pagans do, who have no hope in the resurrection. Although our people died un-

der gruesome circumstances, the dreams of many young people were cut short, they shall rise to be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)."

According to him, seeing this devastation and others that have taken place in the past, one could not but wonder how some people have lost their milk of humanity, saying, "One could hear the attackers jubilantly chanting as they shot, killed innocent people and burnt houses. It was clear that the sadness, sorrow and tears of their innocent victims excited them. They have done this over and over and got away with it. In this kind of situation, we are tempted to ask like the Psalmist: How long, O Lord, shall the wicked rejoice? They pour out arrogant words; they boast of the evil they do (Psalm. 94:4). Some may also ask whether God has forgotten us. But Isaiah provides a response thus: "Can a woman forget her suckling child? Even if she does, I [God], will never forget you" (Isaiah 49:15)."

Also speaking during the burial, the Catholic bishop of Kafanchan diocese, Julius Kundi, maintained that the death of the innocent people wouldn't be allowed to go scot free. He remarked that those behind the mayhem should be arrested and prosecuted.

He equally asked the youths in Southern Kaduna to rise up and demand for justice, saying, "the continuous killings in the area without recourse to justice is enough."

Speaking also, the Vice Chairman of Kaura, Ignatius Raymond, while condemning the

act, wondered how the natives cannot live peacefully on their soil without been provoked. He said the constant attacks, killings and destructions are enough.

"We have suffered for several decades. We have lost several lives. One continues to wonder what those attacking these villages really want," he said.

The vice chairman then called on the people not to take laws into their hands as he was optimistic that one day the present frustrations and mayhem would end.

Ending his sermon, Reverend Bala pleaded with the attackers, "I plead with them to have the courage to come out openly and tell the world the wrong the people have done to them. If at all they have any grievances, let them have the courage to pursue justice lawfully.

"They should realise that if everyone should be taking the law into their hands as they do, life will be a circle of violence and Nigeria will be the saddest country to live in. They should also know that no matter what they do, they cannot kill everyone in any part of the country."

He insisted that, "History has shown that no matter a devastation, some will certainly survive all the evil to tell the stories. The attackers should know that by their actions, they are only sowing seeds of bitterness and hatred, and they will surely not escape the anger of God, unless they repent.

"The attackers may laugh now, but it is only for a time. Unless they repent, their end shall be sorrowful. Let them check history. Never has evil ever triumphed over good. Those they are afflicting now will laugh last and longer. Jesus says; "Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6:25).

He said, "these are indeed trying times for us. We cannot afford to be asleep. We must keep awake. We must not allow ourselves to give in to the antics of our attackers. Let us not allow them push us into doing things that are unlawful and acting against our Christian faith. Our faith teaches us to constantly pray and watch," he asserted.



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