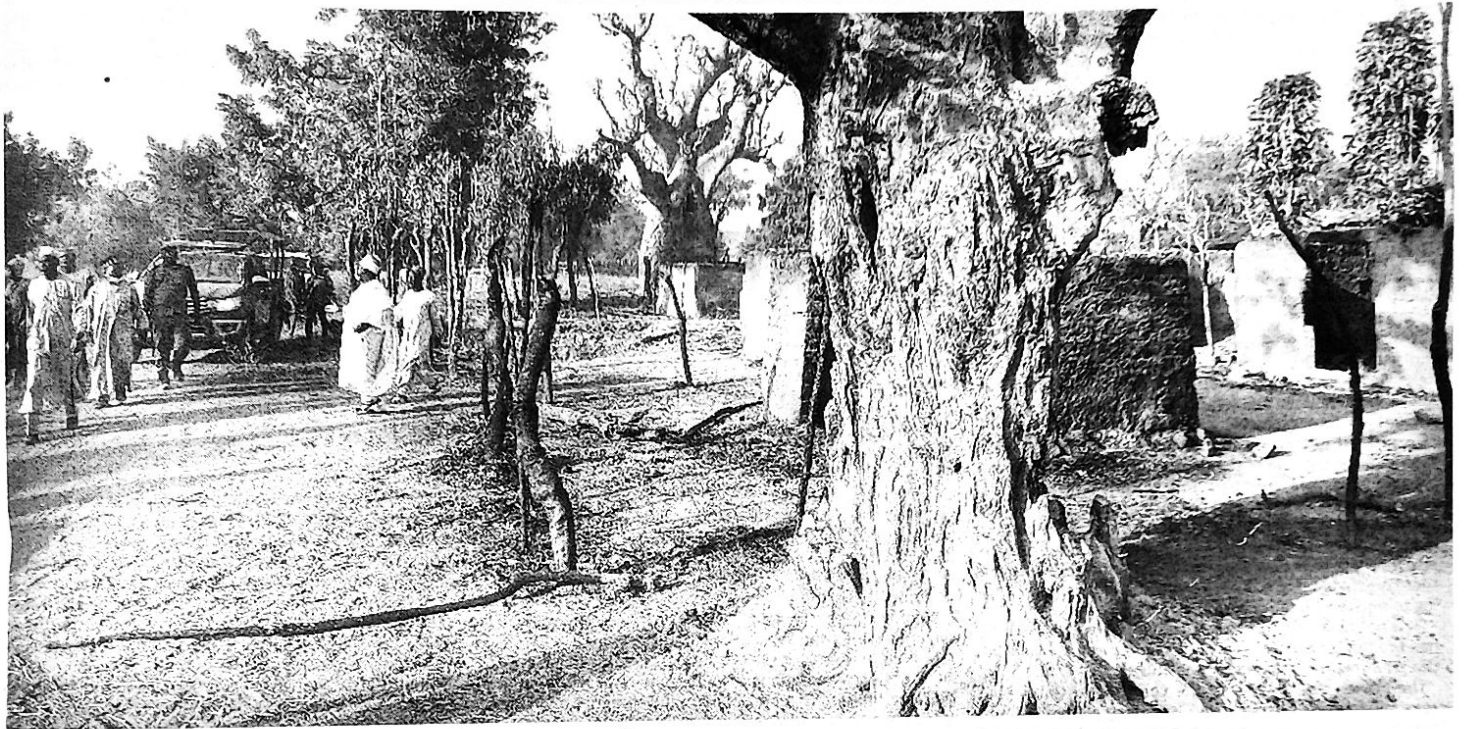


## features

# How bandits sacked Bauchi villages, killed 20 people, burnt houses, looted stores, grains

ISHOLA MICHAEL reports how bandits wreaked havoc on villages in Bauchi State, killing many and burning houses.



Governor Bala Mohammed visited the communities to see what the situation on the ground is.

**"O**UR village has been attacked on four different occasions by bandits (who) maim and kill our people. Our farmlands have been destroyed; our houses burnt down to ashes. In fact, we have been chased out of our ancestral land and have become refugees in another land."

That was the lamentations of 37-year-old Adamu Shehu, a resident of Bagwas village in Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State, one of the villages that have been sacked by gun-wielding bandits who have ravaged communities in the interior of Bauchi State regarded as soft targets.

Shehu narrated that the bandits on each of their visits to the village left behind, anguish, sorrow and sadness occasioned by the massive destruction that always followed after their nocturnal visits.

According to him, "We have become helpless and hapless; we have lost everything we possessed to the bandits. In fact, we have all relocated from the village. As you can see, the village has been deserted; nobody is here again. The few of us you are seeing here, came because the Governor came visiting, we are here to tell him the story."

According to him, the bandits on the last visit, which was recently, killed four people and wounded several others. "They always come at night when people sleep, set houses on fire and force people to run for safety in order to allow them plunder our grains and other possessions."

Shehu said that people of the village have relocated to Gombe, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa and Yobe states to start a new life far away from the incessant attacks by the bandits, expressing happiness with the visit of the Governor and hoping that it will change the situation for better.

The young man added that the bandits ensured that they exhausted the wealth of one man called Maikudin Sama, as he was the target each time they visited. He explained that "When he could no longer meet their demand for money, they tried to kill him but he managed to escape and left the village with his family, vowing never to come back."

He also narrated that one pastor had to leave the village with his entire family after he survived the attack by the bandits during the last attack, lamenting that the entire village which had not fewer than 200,000 people, has now become a ghost village.

Also, Haruna Ibrahim who lost his means of livelihood to the bandits described the situation as most unfortunate, saying that the people of Bagwas village have resigned their fate to God because they are helpless.

According to him, "I have lost everything to the bandits; no more means of livelihood. I have sent my family away to another location. We hope that with the coming of the Governor, the situation will change for better."

better."

It is the same sad story at Rimi village which was attacked by the bandits and completely burnt down, killing 17 people, mostly women and children in the process. This has turned the once bubbling village which used to have a population of not less than 300,000 inhabitants into another graveyard.

One of the indigenes of the village, Tanko Usman narrated that the attack on Rimi village was a revenge mission by the bandits who he said were angered by the steps taken some months ago by the traditional rulers of the village over a notorious boy in the village.

He narrated that, "The Fulani boy has been a notorious criminal operating alongside the bandits in the area, kidnapping our people for ransom. When the people got tired of his criminal activities, he was reported to the Police, arrested and taken to Alkaleri but few days after, he came back to the village threatening to deal with everyone for daring to report him to the Police which he claimed are his 'friends'."

Usman added that "Not long after the

threat, one night, the bandits stormed the village, set every house on fire and when people rushed out, they shot and at the end of the operation which lasted several hours, 17 people were killed while food items were burnt completely. As you can see, the village has been deserted, majority of the people of the village are taking refuge in Mansur."

Angered by the activities of the bandits which had led to the death of innocent villagers, Bauchi State governor, Senator Bala Mohammed Abdulkadir, visited the area last Thursday, describing the situation as unfortunate and an unacceptable trend that must be stopped at all cost.

Speaking at the Palace of the District Head of Yelwan Duguri, Alhaji Adamu Mohammed Duguri, the governor lamented that the activities of bandits in the area is getting out of hands, as the people could no longer engage in farming which is their mainstay.

Bala Mohammed charged the residents of the area to "rise up, take up arms and defend yourselves. You are known to be men, you should not allow these bad elements subdue you, defend your land and liberate yourselves."

He also charged the people to search themselves and bring out the bad eggs amongst them who are serving as informant to the bandits, stressing that without inside information, the bandits cannot operate.

The governor assured that his administration will continue to work assiduously in collaboration with the security agencies operating in the state to protect lives and properties of innocent citizens.

At Kafin Duguri, the governor commended the people for standing to defend them-

When the people got tired of his criminal activities, he was reported to the police, arrested and taken to Alkaleri but few days after, he came back to the village threatening to deal with everyone for daring to report him to the police which he claimed are his 'friends'.