

Bandits attack Niger community, kill 21, abduct others

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Residents said the latest attack came two days after gunmen attacked Pangu Gari and killed the district head and four other persons. The state Commissioner for Homeland Security, Brigadier-General Bello Abdullahi Mohammed (rtd), confirmed the attack. Mohammed did not give the details, but he said the state government was working in collaboration with security agencies to put an end to the incessant attacks on farming communities in the state. Gunmen on Monday kidnapped at least 87 people in a new attack in Kaduna. Officials said the attack took place in the Kajuru area of Kaduna state and the abducted included

women and children.

Bandits routinely loot villages and carry out mass kidnappings for ransom in northwest and north-central Nigeria, where the violence has displaced about one million people, according to the United Nations.

Authorities have seemed powerless to stop the near-daily attacks, piling pressure on President Bola Tinubu.

On Monday, Kaduna State police spokesperson Mansur Hassan said the Kajuru incident happened on Sunday night, adding that security agents had been deployed to rescue the villagers.

"They went and removed people from their homes at gunpoint," local official, Ibrahim Gajere, told the Agence France-Presse news

agency.

Residents said armed men dressed in army uniform arrived in the village undetected because they had parked their motorbikes away from the village.

Village head, Tanko Wada Sarkin, said 87 people were taken.

"We have so far recorded the return of five people back home who fled through the bush. This attack makes it five times that these bandits have attacked this community," Sarkin told the Reuters news agency.

AruwaYa'u, another resident, said he was captured but later released by the gunmen because he struggled to walk due to his poor health. He was receiving treatment at a local government clinic, he said.

"We were outside our homes chatting around 10:30pm [21:30 GMT], and suddenly bandits appeared, beating and shooting," HarunaAtiku said. His wife and two daughters are missing.

Last Saturday, 16 people were kidnapped in the Dogon Noma area, about 10km (six miles) away, officials said.

On March 7, gunmen kidnapped more than 250 students from a school in Kuriga village, about 150km (93 miles) from Kajuru in one of the biggest attacks in years.

Kidnappings at schools in Nigeria were first carried out by the Boko Haram group, which seized more than 200 students from a girls school in Chibok in Borno state a decade ago. But

the tactic has since been adopted by criminal gangs who do not have any ideological affiliations but are seeking ransom payments.

Kidnapping victims in Nigeria are often freed after negotiations with the authorities although a 2022 law bans handing money to kidnappers and officials deny ransom payments are made.

The kidnappings are tearing apart families and communities who have to pool their savings to pay the ransoms, often forcing them to sell prized possessions like land, cattle and grain to secure the releases of loved ones.

The Nigerian risk consultancy, SBM Intelligence, said it has recorded 4,777 people abducted since Tinubu took office in May.