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Gunmen kill 30, burn 40 houses in Plateau

JANUARY 7, 2014 BY JUDE OWUAMANAM 51 COMMENTS

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Plateau State Governor Jonah Jang

No fewer than 30 people were reportedly killed and 25 others injured on Monday when gunmen struck at Shonong in Bachit District of the Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State.

The latest round of killings came barely 12 days after the burial of the acting heads of Shonong and Attarkar, who were murdered on December 23.

Our correspondent gathered from eye-witnesses that apart from those killed, over 40 houses were torched by the gunmen believed to be Fulani cattle rearsers. Also

affected were domestic animals belonging to the villagers.

The attackers were said to have stormed the village around 7am on Monday in a commando-like manner, shooting sporadically. Those killed were caught in the pandemonium that followed staccato bursts of gunfire.

Shom Toma, one of the survivors, who is receiving treatment at the Vom Christian Hospital, Jos, told journalists that the attackers numbering over 100 struck at a time most of the villagers had gone to their farms.

Toma said he was moulding some blocks near his house when he heard gunshots. He said most of the victims were children and elderly people.

The Executive Director of Stefanos Foundation, Mr. Mark Lipdo, said that information available to him indicated that the dead could be over 30.

He added that a search team was still going round the village looking for some of the villagers who ran into bushes with gunshot wounds.

Lipdo said, "Information just reaching us says Fulani herdsmen attacked Bachit, Shorong in Riyom LGA. Sources said over 30 bodies were seen in some parts of the community, including the bushes.

"The villagers are presently watching helplessly as soldiers have taken no action because they said they have not been given order to take action."

But the Plateau State Police Commissioner, Mr. Chris Olakpe, said, "I was told that only four people were killed and a couple of houses burnt."

A member of the state House of Assembly, Mr. Daniel Dem, described the incident as unfortunate and regrettable.

Dem, who is the Majority Leader of the Plateau State House of Assembly, lamented that the Special Task

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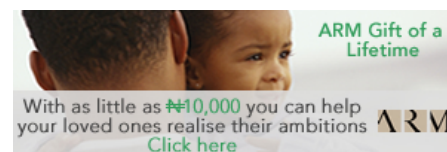
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Force had not been able to stem killings in the area.

He said, "If the military is there in the village and the attack lasted till noon on Monday, then the military has so many questions to answer."

When contacted, the Spokesman for the Special Task Force, Capt. Salisu Mustapha, said that soldiers at a checkpoint received an alert that two people on their way to the farm had been attacked by gunmen.

He added that the soldiers raced to the scene but received more alerts that the attackers had attacked the village.

"The soldiers had to call for reinforcement as the attackers came in large numbers," Mustapha said, adding that six people were confirmed killed and five others wounded.

He also said that the STF Commander, Maj. Gen. David Enetie, had gone to the area.

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