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33 victims of Plateau attacks get mass burial

JANUARY 8, 2014 BY JUDE OWUAMANAM AND SODIQ OYELEKE

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THE 33 people killed in Monday's attack in Shonong village in Bachit District of Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State were given mass burial on Tuesday.

The burial was done amidst wailing and weeping by friends, sympathizers and family members of the deceased.

Shortly after the mass burial, the community leader, Mr. Ilya Vomagai, said the attackers, armed with sophisticated weapons arrived the community on Monday at about 9am when most of the able-bodied men had gone to farm.

He said that the armed men descended on the people, most of whom were the aged, women and children and massacred them.

Iliya said, "The attackers had a field day and also burnt some of those killed beyond recognition. The attack lasted for three hours but was later repelled by men of the STF."

Meanwhile, the Plateau State government on Tuesday described the attack as barbaric and called on the police to fish out the killers.

Our correspondent gathered that 13 more bodies were discovered in a bush by the villagers with 10 of them burnt beyond recognition. This is contrary to claims by the Special Task Force that only 16 people were killed while five were wounded.

The government, in a statement signed by the state Commissioner of Information, Mr. Yiljab Abraham, on Tuesday said the unprovoked killing and burning of houses and food crops were highly provocative, condemnable and barbaric.

According to the statement, "It is becoming increasingly apparent that the attackers' tactic is to displace communities and ultimately occupy their homes by striking them with terror and unwarranted fury.

"However, this will not succeed due to security measures being taken and increased community vigilance."

Abraham added that the state government was working with the various security agencies to adopt extra measures to defeat this emerging insurgency.

However, the spokesperson for the Lagos State House of Assembly and Chairman, House Committee on Information, Strategy, Security and Publicity, Mr. Segun Olulade, has accused the Federal Government under the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan of deliberate negligence of killings and insecurity in Plateau State.

The lawmaker, who represents Epe Constituency II, lamented that it was improper for the Federal Government to underplay the degree of insecurity, incessant killings and unending clashes among ethnic communities in the state.

He added that it was important for government to intervene in the violence rocking the state, saying it was obvious that the governor of the state, Jonah Jang, could no longer ensure security of lives and properties of the citizens.

He said, "The attacks being carried out in affected areas of Plateau are not too different from that of Boko Haram insurgents. Gunmen often troop into villages, numbering hundreds and start shooting sporadically in commando-like manner, mostly while innocent people were asleep or have gone to farm, leaving hundreds of people dead and their houses burnt to ashes."

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