

Kayode Idowu

The Chairman of Kala Balge Local Government Area of Borno State, Babagana Malarima, has said 236 were killed in the Air Force's accidental bombing of an internally displaced people's camp in the state's northern town of Rann.

Malarima, who demanded compensation from the Federal Government, stated that the volume of destruction of lives and property calls for intervention by means of compensation for the survivors.

The LGA chairman, during a condolence visit by the Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai, on Friday, described the death as massive.

He asked the Federal Government to build roads that would link the community to other parts of the state, saying access to Cameroon was easier than Gamboru Ngala, another Borno town 30 km away.

Malarima said, "Our problem since this local government was created about 20 years now (is that) we need a road to link this headquarters to other parts of the state.

"Many people have lost their loved ones and most of them are the breadwinners. About 234 is not a small number. We need to compensate these people; 234 buried by the community.

"And it's even more than this. The report I received from Maiduguri this morning is that two who are in the hospital have also died, therefore we need to be compensated seriously.

"It was a market day yesterday (Thursday), but it was not like the normal market day. This is a place where our activities are skeletal, but it was at the lowest ebb yesterday."

Buratai pleaded with the people, saying he had been meeting with commanding officers to ensure that there was no repeat of the tragic incident.

According to the army chief, two days after the tragedy, a group of Boko Haram members launched an attack on Rann, targeting the traumatised civilians and the troops.

He said the insurgents were successfully repelled with 15 (Boko Haram) fighters killed and one captured alive with arms and ammunition.

Buratai, while displaying the assailants' corpses and weapons, added, "The intelligence information we got from our partners was that Boko Haram terrorists were moving into this place and the information was that they were already in this place. It's not unconnected because you (Rann residents) saw them coming to attack here.

"It must be the information that was passed to the air components (pilots) for them to take necessary action, and unfortunately, a mistake happened. It has happened before in other places and we pray it doesn't happen again."