

Offa bank robbery: 30 feared dead

Published April 7, 2018

Share

Share

Tweet

Scenes of the Offa robbery

- Nine police officers, seven civilians killed, says Kwara CP
- Govt'll pay hospital bills, says Ahmed
- Robbers must be arrested, prosecuted – Saraki

Success Nwogu, Leke Baiyewu and Tunde Ajaja

The number of persons that lost their lives to the bank robbery in Offa, Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State, on Thursday may have risen to 30, Saturday PUNCH has learnt.

This was a sharp increase in the 12, comprising six policemen and six civilians, that was reported on Friday.

Several eyewitnesses who spoke with one of our correspondents said body count at the scene of the incident indicated that those who lost their lives were about 30.

One of them said, “I personally counted up to 30 dead bodies and I am sure the figure might increase because a lot of people were critically injured by gunshots.”

Meanwhile, the Kwara State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Lawan Ado, said on Friday that nine policemen and seven civilians were killed by the armed robbers that stormed five banks in Offa.

Sources told one of our correspondents that the operation lasted for over one hour. It was also learnt that the armed robbers, who were about 30, blew up the entrances to the banks with dynamite and reportedly carted away millions of naira.

They had shot aimlessly and killed many people during the operation.

But speaking through the command’s spokesperson, Mr. Ajayi Okasanmi, in a telephone interview with one of our correspondents on Friday, the commissioner said the police had commenced investigation into the robbery and that six vehicles used by the robbers for the operation had been recovered.

Ado said, “Nine police personnel and seven civilians were killed during the robbery operations,” he said.

Meanwhile, Kwara State Governor, Alhaji Abdulfatah Ahmed, has pledged that the state government would pay the medical bills of the victims of the accident.

Speaking when he visited the victims at the hospital on Friday, the governor, who had ordered that the victims be moved from Offa to Ilorin for better medical care, had, on his Facebook page, directed health services in the state to rapidly deploy emergency services to treat those injured in the attack.

The governor, who went round the wards to meet with the victims, described the incident as unfortunate, while praying to God to grant the injured victims quick recovery.

He said, “We will take care of all their hospital bills; we must begin to watch one another’s back. Policing is everybody’s job, therefore, when we see strange people in our communities, we must learn to report to appropriate security agencies because activities like this require some time for planning and execution.

“I offer my heartfelt condolences to the people of Offa and the families of the victims of this attack. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who died in the attack. I’m in constant touch with the security agencies in the state and I have urged them to do all within their powers to secure Offa and environs and bring the perpetrators to justice.”

He also stressed the need for community policing, saying the police would do better if they have information.

Also, the Senate President, Dr. Bukola Saraki, said he had discussed the matter with the governor and that those who carried out the attacks must be found and prosecuted accordingly.

Saraki, in his Facebook post, described the robbery incident as “a despicable act committed by cruel individuals”.

He added, “I spoke to Governor Ahmed to offer my condolences over the lives that were lost in the attack, and we both agreed that no stone will be left unturned until the perpetrators of this heinous act are caught and brought to justice. We will remain relentless until everyone who planned or carried out this attack faces the full wrath of the law.”

Other persons who spoke on the tragedy were the Speaker of the state House of Assembly, Dr. Ali Ahmad; a labour leader, Mr. Issa Aremu; and the National Coordinator, Muslim Media Watch Group Nigeria, Ibrahim Abdullahi and the Executive Director, Community Outreach for Development and Welfare Advocacy, Mr. Taiwo Otitolaye.

The Speaker tasked security agencies to provide adequate security for lives and property in the state. He pledged that the Assembly would not hesitate to provide the required legislative support to both the executive and security agencies to make Kwara safer for all and sundry.

Also, Aremu called for adequate compensation for the victims of the robbery attack. While Abdullahi lamented that in spite of assurances by security agencies, hoodlums and criminals were having a field day to kill, maim and steal money and property.

Otitolaye also expressed worry that the state had continued to fall prey to unchecked armed robbery, noting that this had forced banks in Omu-Aran Irepodun local government to permanently close their doors to customers for fear of being attacked and robbed.

“The loss of lives of citizens does not mean anything to our so-called leaders, and can we talk about economic growth when banks can no longer open their doors to customers?” he queried.