

Scores killed as bandits attack five Sokoto villages

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Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu

Adeniyi Olugbemi and John Charles

Bandits struck in Rabah and Isa local governments areas of Sokoto State, in simultaneous and coordinated attacks on Saturday evening and killed over 50 people in five villages.

The victims were buried on Sunday according to Islamic rites.

Governor Aminu Tambuwal of the state and some other government functionaries attended the burial ceremony of about 25 of them in Rabah.

It was learnt that in the attack on the Isa Local Government Area, 25 people were killed while many others were injured.

A villager, Abdullahi Maiwada, who witnessed the attack on Sapiru village, told one of our correspondents that, “The bandits stormed Sapiru village, under the Tozai Ward in the Isa Local Government Area at about 5pm on more than 50 motorcycles on Saturday.

“They entered the town shooting sporadically. Eighteen people were killed instantly, while another seven later died. Fourteen of the victims are currently receiving treatment at the general hospital.

“Another two, who are in critical condition, have been moved to the Usman Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital in Sokoto while another one is receiving treatment at the Orthopedic Hospital in Wamakko.”

Another villager from Tsage, who claimed he witnessed the attack but pleaded anonymity, said. “ In the Rabah Local Government, where Tambuwal attended the burial rites, 25 people from Kalfu, Tsage, Rakonni and Geeri villages were killed in another attack.”

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Assistant Superintendent of Police Sadiq Abubakar, who confirmed the attacks, said four suspects who were allegedly involved in the killings, had been arrested. He, however, did not give the casualty figure.

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He said, “Four suspects have been arrested in connection with the weekend attacks, they are in our custody, and will sure help in our investigation.”

Another source hinted one of our correspondents that a woman, pretending to be mad and was alleged to be the bandits’ informant, was among the four suspects in police custody.

Abubakar, however, declined to speak further on the gender of the suspects arrested.

“What matters to us is that we have been able to apprehend some suspects who will assist us in getting to the roots of those behind the attacks,” he said.

Meanwhile, Tambuwal, while condoling with the survivors, mandated the Sokoto Zakat committees in Isa and Rabah local government areas, to assist the internally displaced persons.

Tambuwal prayed to Allah to forgive the deceased all their sins.

He stated, “I appeal to the security agencies to redouble their efforts towards containing the menace. Though, based on the constitution, provision of security is the responsibility of the Federal Government, the state government will continue to support security agencies in the discharge of their duties.”

Buhari condemns killings, commiserates with Tambuwal

Meanwhile, President Muhammadu Buhari on Sunday condemned the killings.

A Presidency statement by Buhari’s spokesman, Mr Garba Shehu, said Buhari was alarmed by the development.

It said, “The President, who was briefed about the incident and the arrests so far made by the police, condoles with Governor Aminu Tambuwal and the people of the state over the tragic incident.

“President Buhari strongly condemns all acts of violence and terrorism against innocent Nigerians, reiterating that perpetrators and sponsors of such dastardly acts would be held accountable under the law.”

‘3,641 killed in Benue, Zamfara, four others in 34 months’

Meanwhile, the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA-Nigeria) on Sunday said more than 3,641 people were killed in six states between January 2016 and October 2018.

The states affected, according to the President of WAANSA Nigeria, Mrs Josephine Habba, are; Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau Kaduna and Zamfara.

WAANSA is an organisation with network in West African countries which is at the forefront of an advocacy for putting an end to illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Habba, who spoke at the press conference in Makurdi on Sunday, said the figure represented the victims of violent clashes between herders and farmers.

She added that about 2,000 of the deaths were recorded in 2018 alone.

Habba said, “The negative impact of poor control of arms in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised; more than 3,641 people were killed in Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna, and Zamfara states between January 2016 and October 2018 due to violent clashes between herders and members of the farming communities; 57 per cent of them were killed in 2018 alone.

“These clashes have been a fight to control and access resources including water, land and pasture. According to Amnesty International, the Nigerian government has the constitutional responsibility to protect lives and property and where this has not worked as expected; this promotes the demand and supply of small arms and light weapons.”

She said that aside from deaths resulting from the gun violence, hundreds of thousands of persons had been displaced internally.

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“In Benue State alone, 483,692 persons have been displaced, 56.24 per cent of the displaced population are children; 22.59 per cent are women, while 21.17 per cent are men.

“These statistics are based on the profiling of IDPs in Benue State carried out by Jireh Doo Foundation in collaboration with the Benue State Emergency Management Agency and Community Links. Sadly these killings are still ongoing,” she said.

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