

# Bandits who killed my dad came with list of targets, abducted 40 — Zamfara victim

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•Mamman

Danladi Mamman, whose father and four others were killed during Friday prayers in a mosque in Dutsin Gari village, in the Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State, on November 22, 2020, talks to ALTINE MAIHARAJI about the circumstances that led to his father's death and how bandits

have forced residents in several communities into hiding

*Were you among the worshippers who were recently attacked by bandits during congregational prayers in a mosque in Dutsin Gari village?*

Yes, I was in the mosque on that fateful day when the bandits came on motorcycles.

*Can you explain how it happened?*

Immediately they (bandits) arrived, they surrounded the entire mosque. We were in the second portion of the prayers when we heard gunshots. Some people abandoned the prayers and rushed out of the mosque, while others, including myself, waited until we finished.

*What happened after the prayers?*

Immediately after the prayers, the bandits told us to come out of the mosque and follow them to their hideout. Some people objected and wanted to run away. That was why five of them, including my father, were shot dead by the bandits.

*So you lost your father in the incident?*

Yes, my father was killed as he was trying to run away.

*What is his name?*

His name is Muhammadu Sani.

***What happened to those who didn't run away and agreed to follow the bandits to their hideouts?***

We were matched into the bush while the bandits kept on telling us that they came to kidnap some people among us for ransom. Their leader told us that they had the list of those they came to abduct. So, they asked us to continue trekking until we were far away from our village before they told us to stop.

***Did you see the list?***

When we stopped, their leader brought out a list of those they came to kidnap and began to call the affected people. But before the roll call commenced, the bandits' leader seriously warned that if anyone heard his name and refused to answer, such a person would have himself to blame. As the roll call commenced, they realised that most of the people whose names were included on the list were not around. Even the village head, Alhaji Ibrahim Nabature, who was first on the list, was not around.

Meanwhile, three out of the five people shot dead were among the people they came to kidnap. Their leader was angry and asked his men who fired the shots to identify themselves.

***What happened then?***

Immediately they identified themselves, he directed some fellow bandits to shoot them. They were killed in our presence. When they realised that most of those they came to kidnap were not among us, they selected about 40 people who looked wealthy and released the rest, including myself.

***How did you feel when you were released by the bandits but you realised that your father was killed?***

Sincerely speaking, I can't explain the situation I found myself in on that day because when the bandits released us, we all rushed home, full of joy. But when I got the information that my father was killed, my mood changed immediately. I cried over the loss of my caring and loving father who is gone forever.

***How much did they demand as ransom from each of those kidnapped?***

The families of the kidnapped persons are waiting to hear from the bandits, though many people have fled to other towns for fear that the bandits could come back. More than half of the people of this village have run away. The remaining ones you are seeing here are the poorest and the bandits don't like to waste their time on them because they know that they will not get much as ransom if they are kidnapped.

***Are there other communities facing attacks by bandits?***

There are many villages around us also facing a similar problem. For example, some residents in villages like Tiki, Nahuta, Talli, Munkuru and Babu-dama are fleeing to other places because of persistent attacks by bandits. Nobody from these villages can sleep at home. They normally stay in their villages during the day and immediately the sun is set, they run to the bush and hide before returning in the morning.

***Now that it is harvest time, do farmers go to their farms to harvest their crops in your area?***

The issue of harvest is impossible here because the bandits are all over the area, hunting for people to kidnap. I am telling you, many people will lose their crops.

***Is the government aware of your plight?***

The government is quite aware of what is happening and to be fair to the governor, he is trying his best on security. The issue is that the bandits know the area more than the security agents who are not conversant with the terrain here. That is why the security personnel are always ambushed and killed by the bandits.

***What do you think should be done to address the issue of insecurity in the state?***

As a young man, I think the state government should as much as possible incorporate the youths in the fight against banditry. Some groups, like Yansakai and Yanbanga, should be used by the government to help the conventional security agents who are not conversant with the terrain of our areas. I and other able-bodied young men like myself are ever ready to defend our communities against banditry and other forms of crimes.

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