

Naval personnel deployed as gunmen kill nine in Kogi community

Gbenga Odogun 2 September 2021

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Kogi map

Naval personnel have been drafted to strengthen the security architecture in Bagana, Omala Local Government Area of Kogi State, following Tuesday's invasion of the community by gunmen, who allegedly killed nine persons.

The PUNCH reports that apart from the nine persons, who were shot dead, several others sustained varying degrees of injury.

The Chief Security Officer for the local government council, Stephen Shuaibu, said there were threats of reprisals from different quarters, hence the proactive move of deploying naval personnel to prevent a further breakdown of law and order.

The villagers, while recounting their ordeal, noted that since December 2014, the village had on two occasions been attacked, leading to the death of scores and burning down of houses.

They said incessant killings by militias had forced many residents to evacuate their families and belongings from their ancestral homes to become internally displaced persons in neighbouring villages and states.

According to them, a prominent Hausa chief, Alhaji Audi Abdullahi, and the chief of Ihanke were at different times abducted and killed by yet-to-be apprehended bandits.

They explained that seven of their children residing outside the state came home for the last Sallah celebration and were gruesomely murdered even as the video of their torture went viral.

The villagers alleged that the trouble might not be unconnected to the battle to control the resources of the community by the four major tribes of Igala, Hausa, Otutubatu and Ihankpe.

A source said, “Bagana, although a multi ethnic community, used to be a haven of peace until the chiefs of Otutubatu and Ihankpe moved their headquarters from Omagede and Patanyi; these villages are more than 10 kilometres from Bagana, the headquarters of the Bagana District of the Omala LGA.

“The two clans have been at each other’s throat in an attempt to control the economic life of the village by using mercenaries to unleash terror on the village.

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“In an attempt to control the carnage, the immediate past governor, Captain Idris Wada, had summoned the chiefs to Lokoja and warned them to maintain the peace, but unfortunately, the warning fell on deaf ears.

“The then governor had stationed a detachment of soldiers and mobile policemen to maintain the peace, but they too became casualties as two soldiers and four policemen were lost to the AK-47 wielding militiamen.”

A community leader, Alhaji Ismaila Umar, urged Governor Yahaya Bello to establish a naval post and a police post in the village, saying its location on the bank of the River Benue had made it vulnerable to all kinds of criminals.

The paramount ruler of the Omala Local Government Area, Boniface Musa, condemned the killings and urged the chairman of the council, Ibrahim Aboh, and the governor to enforce the earlier directive to the unauthorised chiefs in Bagana to relocate to their domains.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP William Aya, said one Usman Salifu called the Divisional Police Officer on the telephone around 9.30pm on Tuesday that his shop had been attacked by gunmen, who killed his sales boy, Bashir Sule, and three other customers, while scores sustained varying degrees of injury.

He stated that on the receipt of the distress call, the DPO mobilised his men to the scene and evacuated some of the injured to hospital, adding that the command had commenced a manhunt for the assailants with a view to bringing them to justice.

Aya added that peace had returned to the community and asked the residents to return home to continue with their legitimate business.