

Wailings as bandits overrun Niger communities, kill three, abduct 28

Friday Olorok, Stephen Angbulu and Aisha Wakaso

THREE people have been killed and 28 abducted by gunmen in Farin-Shinge, Kulho, Jigawa, Dogo Fadama communities of Mashegu Local Government Area of Niger State.

The abductions and killings were carried out between Friday and Saturday in the communities.

This is just as the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (ret.), directed the nation's armed forces to embark on a major military operation to end killings and kidnappings in the state.

The Vice-Chairman of Kontagora Local Government Area, Aliyu Makiga, who confirmed the attack on Farin Shinge community, said the gunmen stormed Tegina in large number to carry out the attack.

"They kidnapped a lot of people; some have been released while others are still with them," he said.

Makiga revealed that the gunmen have demanded for seven 50 litres gallons of fuel, packs of Viju Milk and other drinks as ransom for the abductees from the Farin-Shinge community.

"They are demanding for ransom of seven 50 litres gallons of petrol, Viju Milk and other drinks," he said.

Another group of gunmen were said to have attacked Jigawa, Dogo Fadama and surrounding communities, killing two people while four others were abducted.

According to a resident of Jigawa

community, Umar Mohammed, the gunmen conducted a house-to-house search, rustling cattle and abducting people.

Mohammed said although the attack took the community unaware, majority of the residents were able to escape when the gunmen arrived.

In Kulho community, the gunmen began the attack at about 3.30 pm and ended the operation at about 6pm.

A resident named Tanko Kulho was shot dead and 16 people were abducted while shops were looted and over 18 motorcycles stolen by the gunmen.

A resident in Kulho, Abdulrahman Adamu, who confirmed the attack, said six of his family members, including his three elder brothers, were among those who were abducted.

"We were all seated at the market square when we saw many motorcycles carrying at least three people on each and they were well armed with AK-47. The operation started around 3.48 pm and they left Kulho at around 6.07 pm.

"Many people were abducted. Six of my family members were abducted. They include my elder brothers, Yakubu Kulho, Gambo Kulho, Haruna kulho, my younger brother, Baba Nda Karami, my nephew, Mohammed Gaddafi, and my elder brother's wife, Salaha Kulho. Six of them in my family were taken," he said.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Wasiu Abiodun, confirmed

the abduction but said only 15 people were abducted.

Buhari orders military crackdown on Niger kidnappers, bandits

But Buhari has directed the nation's armed forces to embark on a major military operation in Niger State.

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday titled 'President Buhari sets the ball rolling for a big military operation in Niger State.'

He said Buhari has directed the military to respond "robustly" to the attacks.

He said, "In a directive to the Defence Headquarters a few days ago, the Commander-in-Chief of the nation's armed forces asked the military to respond robustly to the cases of killings and kidnappings in the state and to give effect to the strategic objectives through the use of force.

"In his message to the government and people of Niger State, President Buhari said, 'I would like to express sincere sympathies to the government and people of the state following recent security incidents.'"

Buhari reiterated that security is a responsibility of every member of the community and only through solidarity and cooperation with law enforcement agencies can the nation defeat the problems finally.

"The Federal Government is

willing to strengthen support and cooperation with all the states. I believe that with the full cooperation of the citizens, we will surely overcome this problem," the President was said to have added.

Political leaders' assurances leave more to be desired -Kaigama

Meanwhile, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja Diocese, Ignatius Kaigama, on Sunday expressed fears over the challenges facing the country, saying Nigeria has become a nation of uncertainties.

He noted that the assurances of political leaders and security operatives in the face of insecurity always leave more to be desired.

The cleric made his position known in his sermon delivered at St. Andrew's Parish, Orozo, Abuja.

Kaigama said, "Unfortunately, we have become too uncertain about many things; unsure each day about what will become of our people if they go to the farms or streams, what may befall villagers at night, or even in broad daylight in the cities, where people get abducted in exchange for cash.

"In Nigeria, we seem to transit from one major national challenge to another. We witness the criminal activities and mindless killings such as the recent attacks in Zamfara State, and efforts by terrorists to establish themselves as a government within a government, yet, the assurances of political leaders and security operatives always leave more to be desired."