

Hoodlums invade Benue couple's burial, kill community leader, eight mourners

John Charles 28 February 2022

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Benue CP, Wale Abass

No fewer than nine people, including a traditional ruler, were killed on Saturday at Imande Mbakenge, Mbache, in the Katsina Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

A source said some bandits rode into the community on motorcycles while people gathered for the burial of a couple.

According to the source, the area had been under the grip of gang members loyal to a kidnap kingpin, Terwase Akwaza, aka Gana, who was killed by the military in 2020.

The source said, “It was at the burial of Mr and Mrs Atenoe Agbev that some bandits killed 11 people.

“The place has been full of bandits in recent times, so the group came on three motorcycles, well armed. Immediately they got there (burial place), they went straight to where the traditional head named Zaki Ityav Gande was seated. They searched him, took away some money and shot him. They opened fire on the people and killed 11 persons at the burial.”

The Chairman of Kastina-Ala LGA, Alfred Atera, however, said nine people were killed.

He noted that the killing by the bandits was a reprisal for the operation carried out by troops of *Operation Whirl Stroke* last Thursday and Friday, when three people were killed.

Atera said three other people were critically injured with gunshots and were taken to an undisclosed clinic for medical attention.

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The Commander, *Operation Whirl Stroke*, Major General Kevin Aligbe, also confirmed the killings, but did not state any figure.

Aligbe also denied that the attack was a reprisal for the killing of bandits by the military.

He said, "It is true that we are on operation around that area. The reason is that these guys (bandits) have been killing and extorting people so whatever happened yesterday (Saturday) is not a result of what we are doing because some of them (bandits) have submitted weapons within the last two weeks or something like that. But in the next two weeks, we are going to get all of them."