

Bombing: Civilians, soldiers deaths high, gov laments

• Kaduna attack death toll hits 38

Maiharaji Altine and Israel Bulus

GOVERNOR Bello Mattawalle of Zamfara State has confirmed that scores of residents and soldiers were killed during an operation by the Nigerian Air Force in the state.

Mattawalle condoled with the families of the victims.

PUNCH Metro had reported that no fewer than 68 residents lost their lives at Mutunji village in the Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State after the Air Force launched air strikes on a market while bombarding suspected hideouts of bandits in the state.

The bandits were also said to have ambushed soldiers who wanted to provide ground support for the Air Force, killing 10 of them.

The state governor, in a



• A victim of the Zamfara attack

broadcast to the people of the state on Tuesday, expressed sadness over the death of the locals.

He said, "As you are aware, on

Sunday, December 18, 2022, our security forces carried out a well-coordinated aerial and ground onslaught on the enclaves of the

recalcitrant bandits who were planning to invade Muntunji, Malele, and other surrounding villages.

"Several bandits have been neutralised, their settlements destroyed, and a large cache of their weaponry recovered.

"It was a complex and daring operation by our brave security forces which has immensely contributed to making the communities around Dansadau axis safer.

"This is a momentous occasion, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the brave men and women of the Nigerian Army and Air Force who have risked their lives to protect our communities.

"I am aware that in the course of the onslaught against these barbarous elements, scores of lives have been lost from the sides of the friendly communities

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Zamfara

and the security forces. Such casualties are common in complex operations like the one conducted in the area."

An online platform, PR Nigeria, while quoting a source on Tuesday, claimed that the bodies of 213 bandits and their collaborators were recovered after the bombardment.

Meanwhile, the people of Mutunji village have fled their houses following a report that bandits are planning to attack the village.

An indigene, Muhammad Sani, told PUNCH Metro on the phone that the bandits were regrouping to launch a reprisal over the killings of their colleagues.

In a related development, the death toll in the attacks by bandits on Malagum One and Sokwong communities, Kagoro Chieftdom, in the Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, has risen to 38.

The Councillor representing Malagum One, Stephen Atuk,

confirmed the development to PUNCH Metro on Tuesday.

One of our correspondents had reported that no fewer than 29 people were killed in the two communities during separate attacks on Sunday.

The state government had, in a statement, said investigation was ongoing into the killings.

But Atuk, who said the death toll had climbed to 38, described the situation as barbaric.

He explained that 10 corpses were discovered in Sokwong, while 20 motorcycles and 62 houses were razed.

According to him, in Malagum One, 28 dead bodies were recovered while 102 houses were burnt.

Atuk lamented that residents had fled their houses to seek refuge in neighbouring villages.

He said, "As I am talking to you now, none of the villagers escaped with a single cup of beans; their foodstuffs were burnt.

"There is no official IDP camp now; the victims are taking refuge in some neighbouring communities, while some of them are in some primary schools."