

Gunmen kill three in fresh Plateau attack

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File photo: Gunmen

| SOLOMON ODENIYI and JAMES ABRAHAM

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A former governor of Plateau state, Jonah Jang, has condemned what he described as the continued attacks and killing of innocent citizens in Plateau communities by gunmen.

Jang's condemnation came on the heels of the invasion of 25 communities in Barkin Ladi, Bokkos and Mangu communities by gunmen which left over 150 persons dead on Christmas Eve.

This was just as gunmen killed three youths in fresh attack in Bokkos Local Government Area, *Sunday PUNCH* has learnt.

It was learnt that the three youths had gone to pick their relatives who earlier escaped to Bokkos town during an earlier invasion of their community when some gunmen attacked them at Lut village, killing them on the spot on Friday evening.

The Chairman of Community Peace Observers in Bokkos LG, Kefas Mallai, confirmed the death of the three youths to our correspondent in Jos on Saturday

Mallai said, "Some three youths from Angwan Hausawa, Bokkos town; Lurwan Ismail, Muhammadu Tuka, and Mayo, were killed yesterday (Friday) at Lut, one of the communities earlier attacked by assailants on Christmas eve. They went there to pick up their loved ones who escaped to Bokkos town as IDPs when they were killed. Their bodies are missing."

In a statement issued on Saturday titled, 'Plateau killings: One too many and the need for state police', Jang said the Federal Government must do everything possible to stop further attacks and killings in the state and other parts of the country.

According to the statement signed by his media consultant, Clinton Garuba, the former governor said, "It is with a grieving heart that Senator Jonah David Jang wishes to commiserate with the families that lost loved ones during the Christmas Eve attack on communities in Bokkos and Barkin Ladi local government areas of Plateau State.

"This dastardly act has once again tampered with the peace of our dear state as it was orchestrated by people who are hell-bent on ensuring that the ordinary Plateau man does not enjoy the serenity God, through nature, has bestowed on him.

"Choosing to murder harmless villagers in their homes as they prepared to celebrate the Yuletide is the most horrendous wickedness that anyone could imagine. None of the hundreds of our people who lost their lives in the Christmas Eve attack by marauding terrorists envisaged that their lives would be cut short in such a gruesome manner.

"The killings on the Plateau would seem to have gone on unabated as the non-arrest and prosecution of perpetrators have bolstered the serial killers to carry out more and more killings.

"That these killers are out on a cleansing agenda and plan to take over the lands of the people they try to wipe out is no longer hidden.

“While we agree with the President that the culprits must be apprehended and made to face prosecution, we must note that these directives have been issued repeatedly. Yet, neither arrests nor prosecutions have been made in the past. It is therefore pertinent that at this point, there is the need to attend to the call for state police as part of measures for boosting security, ensuring early response in crises and confronting the challenges of insecurity headlong.

“A situation where state governors have no powers to immediately deploy personnel to quell attacks and confront marauding terrorists is worrisome. The killings are getting out of hand and the state police option is viable for nipping these massacres in the bud. States should be given the power to create, train and equip their police to enable State Governors to deal with peculiar security situations in their various states.

More than ever, the time to heed the call for state policing is now.”

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Meanwhile, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi, on Saturday visited Plateau State over the killings in the state.

Obi who arrived in Bokkos around 4pm was said to have moved straight to the camps of the internally displaced persons in the locality.

He was received by the Bokkos Local Government Chairman, Monday Kassam.

The chairman of the Community Peace Observers in the LGA, Kefas Mallai, who confirmed Obi’s visit to the victims in Bokkos LGA said, “Peter Obi just visited IDP camps in Bokkos. He arrived at about 4pm of today (Saturday) December 30, 2023.

According to him, when some citizens are in IDP camps then Nigeria is in IDP camp.

After observing a minute of silence, he condoled with the IDPs in the camps and promised to send N10m into the IDP support account as managed by a committee set up by the TIC Chairman, Bokkos LGC, Monday Kasah, who spoke about the 12 officially recognised IDP camps in the area.

In another development, the Defence Headquarters has refuted allegations of mistreating women in Plateau State.

A video circulating on social media had alleged women in Plateau State were being maltreated by soldiers attached to Operation Rainbow.

The allegation came one week after some terrorists invaded some communities in the state, leading to the death of about 200 persons.

Reacting to the allegation, the Director, Defence Information, Brig. Gen. Tukur Gusau, on Saturday noted that the video in circulation was an incident that took place in Borno State in 2021.

He noted that the soldiers involved in the act were adequately punished.

The statement read in part, “DHQ wishes to clarify that the soldiers involved in the aforementioned incident were then promptly sanctioned and dealt with by the military authority at the time it occurred for their unprofessional conduct. The dissemination of this old video, with a misleading location tag, is causing unnecessary alarm and has the potential to exacerbate the security situation on the Plateau.”

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He, however, urged those behind the circulation of the video to stop, noting that their actions could fuel the security challenges in the state.