

Reign of terror: Two monarchs, 28 others killed in Niger, seven in Benue

Chika Otuchikere and John Charles

More facts on the attack on the Madaka community in the Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State emerged on Friday revealing that over 20 persons were reportedly killed in the onslaught.

Two monarchs and the vigilance group commander of the area were also said to have been killed in that attack on Thursday while the bandits were said to have overrun two communities in the area, burning houses and shops.

The gunmen were said to have stormed the community at about 3 pm on Thursday and shot indiscriminately, leaving many dead and injured.

The Village Head of the Madaka community, Saleh Kakuri, and one Commander Iko, who was the Deputy Commander of the vigilance group in the area under the Madaka District of Rafi were also killed in the attack.

The bandits also invaded Majanjan district where they seized the village head, Salihu Immahuri, his counterpart in Anguwan Bala, and his two wives and killed them.

Among the slain victims were Adamu Immahuri, a brother of the deceased ruler, and his four wives, as well as Shehu Salihu and Jamilu Isah.

A resident of the community who spoke under condition of anonymity said, "Over 30 bodies have been recovered by the villagers. The bandits attacked the communities at about 3:30 pm on Thursday and operated for hours without response from security agencies.

"The bandits operated for as long as they wanted without any challenge from the army or police."

However, the District Head of Madaka, Isah Bawale, confirmed the incident in a phone interview on Friday.

He said, "The attack occurred around 3 pm on Thursday when the community market was in full session resulting in huge casualties. Over 50 houses, including shops, some cars, and motorcycles were burnt down during the attack."

Another resident who gave his name as Adamu said, "The

suspected armed men broke into the village shooting indiscriminately, killing their victims. They also burnt down the market and abducted an unspecified number of the villagers (and took them) to an unknown destination."

Adamu lamented about the absence of the police, adding, "There was a similar attack by bandits on the same communities a few years ago, since that attack where the district head was killed, there has not been security presence in those communities leading to bandits attack without challenges from any quarters."

Several attempts were made to get the Niger State Police Command's spokesman, Wasiu Abiodun, on the phone but they proved abortive.

He, however, sent a terse SMS saying that he did not have details of the attack.

"Details of the incident still sketchy please," he stated.

Also attempts to get the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Bologi Ibrahim, on the phone to speak failed as he did not pick up his calls.

Similarly, bandits have killed seven persons in Yongia Uambie Tiev in Ukembregya/Tswarev ward of the Logo Local Government Area of Benue State.

The incident, according to a community leader, Anawah Joseph, occurred between Tuesday and Wednesday.

Anawah stated that the attackers came in their numbers to attack the community armed with sophisticated weapons.

He said, "These attackers who are armed herders came in groups of up to 500; the Tuesday attack started around 4 pm and lasted till 8 pm, then on Wednesday, they resumed again. I don't think they came to graze but to attack."

Confirming the attack, the Chairman of the area, Rev Adagbe Jonathan, said, "It happened on Tuesday and Wednesday with seven casualties. On Tuesday, two were killed and on Wednesday evening, five were killed in Yongia Ukambie Tiev, Ukembregya/Tswarev ward."

"The attack was carried out by the herdsmen. Even when I went there on an assessment tour, they were still grazing on the other side of the road, claiming that the area was Taraba

State.

"No one could just approach them. I'm even now in Makurdi. I reported to the Special Adviser on Internal Affairs and Security, the Special Adviser, the Bureau of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, and the Permanent Secretary of the Bureau of Internal services."

The lawmaker representing Apa State Constituency in the House of Assembly, Abu Umoru, on Thursday, had lamented the incessant attacks on his constituency, saying he had lost count of casualty of the attack.

He said, "The entire Edikpo community has been displaced, Enre Opaha, where I come from, nobody in that community. (In) Odugbo, nobody is there, (same as) Akpete, Ikobi, Akpata, Idiaha, Ochumekwu, and Adiga."

"Everyday they will be burning houses in Akpete. As I speak to you, for three consecutive days, they have been going to Akpete and burning houses after chasing them out of their ancestral homes."

"They (bandits) have been ambushing, killing people - one, two, three to five persons on a daily basis. Right now, I don't know the number of casualties. There are so many."

Efforts to get the response of the Police Public Relations Officer, SP Catherine Anene, were not successful as she did not pick up calls and did not respond to a text message sent to her.

IG deploys MOPOL

Meanwhile, the Inspection General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, has deployed more mobile policemen to the troubled Apa Local Government Area of Benue State.

Disclosing this to our correspondent on Friday, the Chairman of Apa, Ochayi Alidu, said that he received the notification letter from the IGP deploying the cops to the local government area.

Alidu said, "I am in receipt of a letter of deployment of a unit of MOPOL to Apa at the instance of the state Governor, Rev Fr Hyacinth Alia. The unit (comprises) about 62 officers."

The chairman appreciated President Bola Tinubu and the governor for the prompt response to the plight of the people of the area.