

Six die as bandits, vigilantes clash in Sokoto market

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Nigerian Police

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Six persons have lost their lives in a clash between suspected bandits and vigilantes, locally known as Yan Sakai in the Gada Local Government Area of Sokoto State.

The vigilantes, according to a source in the area who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the matter, were said to have avenged the killing of their leader, one Alhaji Dahiru by a suspected bandit.

Eyewitnesses said the clash started when a leader of the Gidan Hashimu village vigilantes made a move to arrest and interrogate a notorious cattle rustler seen loitering in the market.

The suspected bandits, at the height of the crisis, reportedly shot and killed the vigilantes' leader, which sparked reprisal by members of the vigilantes.

One of the eyewitnesses said before the arrival of the police team at the market, more than six people were said to have been killed some with bullet wounds from gunshots while running for cover to save their lives.

“The vigilantes in the area, provoked by the killing of their two leaders, went on reprisal attacks on Fulani communities in the area where over 50 people were alleged to have been summarily executed by the rampaging group.

“As speak to you now, I and my family are in hiding to avoid another reprisal attack by the suspected bandits.

“There is tension in Gada town, as suspected Fulanis vow to attack the town to avenge the killings of their members.

“Today is Kiri village market day, but you cannot spot a single Fulani male or female in the market area,

“The attack launched by the Vigilantes in many Fulani communities in Gada Local Government Area on Thursday saw the killing of many Fulanis in the area.”

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Also confirming the incident, a member of the state House of Assembly representing the area, Kabiru Gada said, “The incident occurred when a suspected bandits leader was said to have been seen in the Gada market making purchases and some vigilante leaders identified him and demanded his arrest and interrogation.

“He later resisted and instantly shot and matchet the Vigilantes leader of Gidan Hashimu village to death which prompted reprisal against the Fulanis from members of the vigilantes.

“The report at my disposal shows that many people were killed, some with injuries sustained from gunshots fired by both sides. Some Fulanis and Vigilantes lost their lives.”

Another eyewitness, Usman Gada, who spoke with our correspondent, said the leader had trailed and intercepted the suspect who was in the company of his kinsmen on their way to the local cattle market on Thursday.

The suspect was said to have resisted arrest and in the process brought a knife and stabbed the vigilante leader which led to his death.

“When the news about his death reached his colleagues, they mobilised and stormed the market, killing any Fulani man on sight. We counted about eight corpses of Fulanis which were later deposited at the mortuary.

“It was the quick intervention of security operatives that saved the situation because the Yan Sakai, who was about 100, wanted to set the police station where some of the Fulanis ran into ablaze.

“Soldiers surrounded the police station and dispersed them. However, the vigilantes razed down all the Fulanis settlements in the area.”

Confirming the incident, the spokesman for the state police command, ASP Ahmed Rufa’i, said six persons lost their lives during the incident.

“We are still investigating to unravel the remote cause of the problems and bring those behind it to book,” he said.