

# Anger as fresh B'Haram attack leaves 63 dead

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By Isah Ojo

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Widespread anger and grief on Sunday trailed the killing of at least 63 people, including five soldiers, in a fresh Boko Haram attack on Darajamal, a community in Bama Local Government Area of Borno State that had only recently been resettled.

The terrorists reportedly stormed the community late Friday night around 10 p.m., riding on motorcycles, opening fire on residents, and burning houses, shops, and vehicles.

Survivors said the attackers operated for several hours before military reinforcement arrived.

A local resident, who pleaded anonymity, told *The PUNCH*: “Five soldiers were killed. But I am certain that those killed are up to 56 in the attack. Many houses were also burnt down, including buses. They operated for hours before reinforcement.”

Another source revealed that six construction labourers who were not residents of the community were also among the victims.

Borno State Governor, Babagana Zulum, who visited Darajamal on Saturday evening, described the incident as “very sad” and confirmed the casualty figures.

“At this moment we have confirmed that 63 people lost their lives, both civilians and military, although the civilian casualties are more. Close to about 60 civilians and five soldiers lost their lives,” the governor said.

He added: “This community was settled a few months ago and they go about their normal activities, but unfortunately, they experienced a Boko Haram attack last night.

Our visit is to commiserate with them and build their resilience.”

Zulum lamented the shortage of manpower in the armed forces and called for the immediate deployment of newly trained Forest Guards to protect vulnerable communities.

“We have to take note that the numerical strength of the military is not enough to cover everywhere. So far, two sets of Forest Guards have been trained, therefore one of the solutions that we need to implement immediately is to deploy the trained Forest Guards to most of the locations that are vulnerable. They will protect the forest and communities,” he said.

The Nigerian Air Force said it killed more than 30 terrorists in retaliation.

Its spokesman, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, explained in a statement that the strikes were carried out in coordination with ground troops after reports of heavy terrorist engagement against friendly forces in the area.

“Acting swiftly on the situation report, AC OPHK deployed an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and Air Interdiction mission. En route, the aircrew established contact with ground forces in Banki, who confirmed that reinforcements were already moving to support troops.

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“On arrival at Darajamal, the aircrew visually identified friendly forces before ISR scans revealed terrorists fleeing northwards from the town towards nearby bushes. In a series of three precise and successive strikes, the fleeing terrorists were decisively engaged, resulting in the neutralisation of over 30 insurgents,” the statement read.

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Mohamed Fall, condemned the attack, describing it as “appalling” and urging Nigerian authorities to apprehend the perpetrators.

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“I am deeply appalled and saddened by Friday’s reported killing of dozens of civilians in Darajamal Village, Bama LGA. Civilians should never be a target,” he said.

“Preliminary reports indicate that more than 50 civilians were killed... At least 28 houses were also reportedly burned during the attack. The number of casualties is expected to change as more information becomes available.”

He further called for the release of abducted persons, adding: “This recent killing of civilians is yet another grim reminder of the toll of rising violent attacks and insecurity in Borno State this year.”

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar also mourned the victims, calling the incident “senseless violence” and a painful reminder of the heavy price Nigerians continue to pay in the fight against terrorism.

“I am deeply saddened by the tragic killing of scores of people, including gallant soldiers, in the recent Boko Haram attack on Darajamal. This senseless violence is a painful reminder of the heavy price our people continue to pay in the face of terror,” Atiku said in a statement.

“My heartfelt condolences go to the bereaved families, the resilient people of Borno, and Governor Zulum, whose swift compassion in visiting the affected community is commendable. May Almighty Allah grant the departed Al-Jannah Firdaus and comfort their loved ones.”

The senator representing Borno South, Ali Ndume, lamented the rising attacks and faulted the limited capabilities of local vigilantes.

“Men of the Civilian Joint Task Force, hunters and vigilantes have been doing their best, but they have limitations, as they only carry den guns and sticks, which they find very difficult to confront the terrorists,” Ndume said.

He urged the Federal Government to prioritise what he called TEAM—Technology, Equipment, Arms, Ammunition, and Motivation—in the fight against insurgency.

“More so, I want to reiterate my calls on the Federal Government and the Nigerian Military to deploy TEAM, which is the only way to end the over-decade Boko Haram atrocities in Borno, North-East, and other parts of the country,” he said.

Similarly, Senator Kaka Shehu Lawan (Borno Central) described the killings as “a crime against humanity” and pledged legislative support for efforts to restore peace.

Friday’s massacre comes amid a resurgence of violence across the North-East despite intensified military operations.

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Residents and aid groups have warned that resettled communities remain highly vulnerable.

The UN noted that deadly attacks against civilians have also been recorded in neighbouring Adamawa and Yobe states, targeting markets, rural health centres, grain stores, farmers, fishermen, and travellers.

For many in Darajamal, the bloodshed has rekindled fears about whether peace and stability will ever return to Borno after more than 15 years of insurgency.

**| Isah Ojo**