10 killed in fresh Southern Kaduna attacks

•Genocide taking place –Middle Belt Forum

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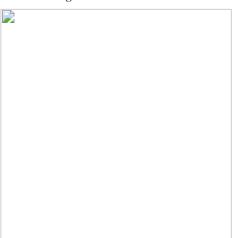
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Sola Ojo, Kaduna, Fred Ezeh, Abuja

Again, bandits terrorising Kaduna State killed 10 persons at the weekend in two separate attacks on three villages in Jema'a and Kaura local government areas.



Governor Nasir El-Rufai had on Friday night extended the 24-hour curfew imposed on troubled Zangon-Kataf to Jema'a and Kaura LGAs to bring the situation under control. The governor, on his Twitter handle on Friday night, said, "at the request of security agencies, the Kaduna State government has extended to Jema'a and Kaura LGAs the 24-hour curfew that is in force in Kauru and Zangon Kataf LGAs to help contain violence, restore law and order in the area."

This time, the bandits attacked Zikpak, Ungwan Masara, in Fantsuam Chiefdom of Jema'a Local Government and Maraban Kagoro, in Kaura LGA, around 7pm on Friday. The attack on the three communities left nine persons dead on the spot, another one died a few hours later, while at least 12 people were said to have sustained varying degrees of injuries. Many houses were also razed.

Though the state Police Command is yet to make an official statement on the development, a witness account said gunmen numbering about 40 invaded the villages and started shooting indiscriminately.

The source said one of the victims who sustained injuries in the Friday night attack died in the hospital Saturday morning, raising the casualty figure to 10.

A Kafanchan-based journalist who was at Zikpak to assess the situation on Saturday said he escaped by the whiskers when the gunmen suddenly launched another attack Saturday morning.

"I was at Zikpak this morning to interview survivors of the Friday night attack. In fact, the youth leader had taken me and a colleague round the village to see the scenes. So, we stood in front of a house to do interview. Suddenly, we started hearing gunshots from the bush at the back of the house. We had to run for our dear lives," he said.

He said the Saturday morning attack was successfully repelled by men of the vigilance group and no casualty was recorded.

The incessant attacks and attendant deaths have drawn the ire of the Middle Belt Forum (MBF) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

Reacting last night, national publicity secretary of MBF, Dr. Dogo Isuwa, alleged that it was part of the agenda to Islamise Nigeria, cautioned that "it is real and should not be treated with kid gloves."

He blamed the state and federal governments for not showing responsibility in protecting the people of Southern Kaduna.

"It has been there probably since 2011. It is genocide on the people of Southern Kaduna. It is an attempt to wipe off all the people of Southern Kaduna. It is alarming that there is a conspiracy; I do not know how to describe the conspiracy, to the extent that, at the federal level, they do not see anything wrong in it.

"To me, and we in Southern Kaduna, we believe that there is that understanding between the Kaduna State and Federal Government to wipe off the people of Southern Kaduna, otherwise, nobody in his right senses would be talking of what has been happening of recent that it is revenge. The Kaduna State government imposed a 24-hour curfew. As I am talking to you now, today, it is 44 days, if I am not making a mistake. Would one not say that you imposed the curfew to even stop the local people from defending themselves so that the criminals, mercenaries and terrorists that have been contracted to wipe us out will now have a field day without any form of resistance?

"Where are the security officials that have been stationed to enforce the curfew when these people are coming in their dozens to kill us every day? How can a reasonable, responsible and logical government go and pay terrorists so that they would not come and kill us, yet the terrorists are killing us now more than ever before? So, we can conclude that the Kaduna State governor did not go to pay the terrorists to stop killing us but to give them more money to buy arms to come and kill us more. That is my interpretation."

But elder statesman and Second Republic lawmaker, Dr. Junaid Mohammed, regretted that the Middle Belt Leaders Forum would make such "irresponsible and incendiary" comments, rather than contribute to the solution of the problem.

He said terrorism was not only a national but international problem that should not be politicised.

He said members of the forum were not representing the people of the Middle Belt but only finding ways to enrich themselves.

He, however, noted that Kaduna government under Governor El-Rufai has not shown enough responsibility in handling the problem.

Regardless, chairman, Northern CAN, Rev. John Hayab, accused the government of promoting an agenda against Christian communities.

"We don't know what's the plan of the government but from all indications and response, the government has a hidden agenda against Christian communities in Southern Kaduna.

"It's unfortunate that people are killed on a daily basis in Southern Kaduna and government officials described it as a reprisal. Can they define reprisal? There's nothing like that. Just recently, people of a particular community were doing their marriage festival when they were attacked by these unknown people. Besides, do we have a law in Nigeria that allows people to destroy peoples source of livelihood in reprisal?

"If we are in democracy in Nigeria, as we claim, and want to go by the rule of law, then the police or the court should intervene, if crime is committed, not people engaging in self-defense. Unfortunately, government is continuously justifying the 'reprisal'.

"We have been asking our people to be law-abiding, obedient and patient, but for how long? Our people are being killed on daily basis. This morning (Sunday), one of our very celebrated lawyers was killed in his house by these unknown gunmen, and his wife and son taken away. This happened in Kaduna town, just by the toll gate."

Hayab accused government of irresponsibility and blackmail against anyone bold enough to speak.

He equally accused Governor El-Rufai of being an "all-knowing man" who neither listens to contributions of people nor gives room for advice.

"The governor does not hold meeting with anybody. He claims to be an all-knowing govenor with solution to everything, and that's why Kaduna is suffering."

He said key leaders of the church in Kaduna would meet toxday to deliberate and analyse the issues, and possibly arrive at a decision, "and we might also encouraged the people to defend themselves and their communities in whatever way they can."

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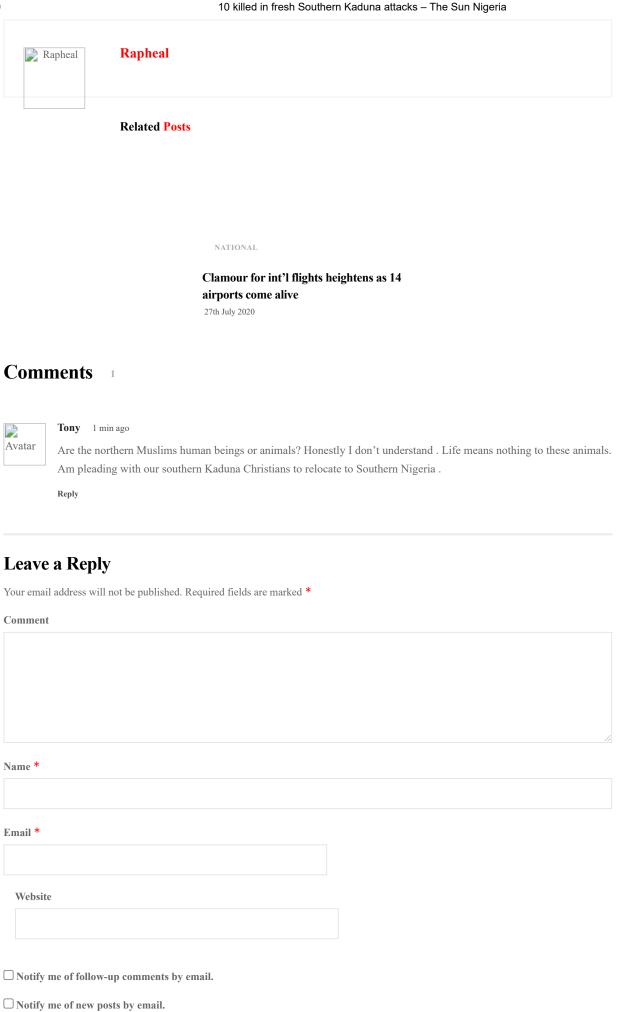
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