

Bandits kill 20 in reprisal attack in Niger

From John Adams,
Minna

ARMED bandits in their large numbers, on Friday night invaded Magami community in the Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, killing no fewer than 20 villagers in what sources close to the community said was a reprisal attack by the gunmen.

A number of the villagers are said to be missing after the night attack while several others fled to neighbouring communities for safety.

It would be recalled that on Wednesday night, men of the Special Security Task Force, comprising the police, local hunters and vigilantes, launched an attack on the bandits, killing about 40 of them and recovered 16 motorcycles including arms and ammunition, mostly AK47 rifles.

However, a spokesman of the Concerned Shiroro Youths, Mallam Yusuf Abubakar Kukoki, who confirmed the latest killings by the bandits to Sunday Sun in a telephone chat yesterday morning, said the bandits came in their numbers, unleashing terror on members of the community in the night.

"Realizing that the combined team of Police Special Force, hunters and local vigilantes who had earlier inflicted heavy casualties on them had returned to their base at Galadima Kogo, the bandits mobilized and returned like a pride of wounded lions killing people at sight. They murdered and butchered their victims with dangerous weapons. Unfortunately, the unarmed, peaceful and defenseless locals are now at the

receiving end.

"By a reliable record, no fewer than 15 people have been gruesomely murdered by the marauding criminals. Six people were confirmed dead at Unguwan Magiro under Madaka Ward, Rafi Local Government Area, four people at Farin Hula and five people at Magami and environs all under Manta Ward of Shiroro Local Government Area while scores of others are still missing - probably killed too," Kukoki said.

He further said that many villagers had fled to Kuta headquarters of the local government and other neighbouring villages.

"Kuta the headquarters of Shiroro local government which is considered a safer ground is swelling up with fleeing IDPs who have since vacated the troubled areas.

He stressed strongly urged the Special Security Task Force to sustain the onslaught against criminals in order to avoid recurrence of such reprisal attack by the bandits.

All efforts to get the reaction of the Chairman of the Local Government Council, Alhaji Sulaiman Chikuba, on phone was unsuccessful despite several calls made to his cellphone.

A government official who spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed the attacks on Kukoki, Bassa, Magami and Madaka villages saying, "they attacked and killed many people but the number is yet to be ascertained."

Police Public Relations Officer Niger State Police Command DSP Wasiu Abiodun when contacted promised to get back to our correspondent but did not do so until the time of going to press.