

Night of pain, sorrow, tears in Plateau

•While villagers slept, bandits wiped out family of 9, 2 others, burnt houses

25th November 2022 in Lifeline

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Burnt vehicle

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From **Gyang Bere**, Jos

November 15 was very bad for residents of Maikatako community in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. That day, a family of nine was wiped out by bandits suspected to herdsmen.

Two other people were also killed, several persons injured, five houses burnt, including a church with valuables worth millions of naira.

It was learnt that the bandits invaded the community at about 10.15pm when villagers had gone to sleep and unleashed terror on the family of 82-year-old Umundum Maren, killing nine members of the family.

Among the dead was one-year-old Longkinan Satmak, who was brutally macheted, leading to loss of excess blood. Longkinan was killed alongside his grandfather, Maren, his father, mother and siblings.

Full list of the victims: Umundum Maren, 82; Satmun Gyokos, 27; Larai Ginai, 70; Seth Matthew, Dorcas Satmak, 28; Peret Satmak, 13; Nanribet Satmak, Longkinan Satmak, 1; Taho Isa, 7; Sakanjalla Isa and Ubwas Emmanuel.



Burnt property and motorcycle

The nine family members were given mass burial, leaving the community in despair, despondency and endlessly mourning. At the moment, the community is deserted and family members have fled for fear of the unknown.

The security agencies, particularly the Operation Safe Haven, are said to have beefed up security around the community, but complaint from the villagers was that security arrived scene of attack only when the harm had been done.

Commander, Operation Safe Haven, Gen. Ibrahim Ali, who visited the scene, commiserated with the families of the victims and the entire community, asking them not to take the law into their hands by engaging in reprisals. He assured them that the security forces will not relent in ensuring that the people get justice.

The police public relations officer in the state, Alfred Alabo, confirmed the incident, and said the police is working round to track the perpetrators to face the wrath of the law.

A resident of the community, Macham Bitrus, described the attack on the innocent community as barbaric and called on government and security agencies to investigate and bring to book the perpetrators of the dastardly act.

Pained by the unhealthy development, Governor Simon Lalong ordered security forces to go after the terrorists who attacked Maikatako village in Bokkos.

Lalong condemned the attack and said the killers must be fished out and brought to justice for the evil act.

He noted with dismay the rising incidences of attacks and destruction of farm crops, livestock and other properties within the general Bokkos area. He said it was becoming worrisome and must be checked immediately.

The governor sympathised with the families of the victims, and reiterated that his administration will not allow terrorists and bandits to take foothold in any part of the state as all security agencies have been directed to be firm and hard on any person or groups behind the criminal acts.

He again appealed to communities to always be security conscious and report any suspicious movements to the security agencies for immediate action, particularly during the forthcoming yuletide season.

Lalong noted that he has received briefing from the sector commander on the nature of the attack and efforts made to counter the terrorists, and commended the troops and the community vigilante for their quick intervention which prevented further losses.

Apart from ordering the deployment of more troops, the STF Commander directed the troops to pursue the fleeing terrorists and ensure that they are apprehended in line with the directive of the governor and President.

The director general of Plateau State Peace Building Agency (PPBA), Joseph Lengmang, was saddened over the deteriorating security situation in Bokkos and some parts of the state and called for collective action to halt the situation.

He said: "The deteriorating security situation in Bokkos Local Government Area, Plateau State in the last few weeks has been a source of concern for not just the PPBA but for people of good conscience.

"We are indeed saddened by this sudden twist of events and its attendant consequence on the socio economic environment in Bokkos in particular, moreso that the harvest season is at its peak.

"PPBA therefore commiserates with families of those who lost loved ones and property in this needless violence. These retrogressive tendencies of citizens taking the law into their hands at the slightest provocation, in all ramifications, is an ill-wind that blows no one any good.

"We are thus compelled to renew the call for the decentralization of the security architecture of the country, especially the constitutional provision that would empower the sub-national units to police territories that are directly under their jurisdiction. This would go a long way in checking these orchestrated commando-style attacks on communities by criminal elements."