

Niger: Gunmen kill 1, abduct 55, rustle cattle

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From **John Adams**, Minna

Barely one week after inauguration of the new Governor of Niger State, Umar Mohammed Bago, gunmen struck in Allawa community in Shiroro Local Government Area of the state, killed one person and went away with over 100 heads of cattle in a broad daylight attack.

The gunmen, who raided over six villages between Allawa in Shiroro and Pandogari in Rafi local government areas of the state, abducted well over 55 villagers from their farms, including women and children, while others fled into the bush for safety.

The latest bandit attack is coming on the heels of meetings between the state governor, Bago, and the various security chiefs in Abuja at the instance of the governor, with a view to addressing the security challenges in the state.

A source close to both Allawa and Pandogari communities, who spoke to Daily Sun in confidence for security reasons, said the gunmen came in their large numbers and attacked the people in their farms, simultaneously, across the villages in broad daylight.

He disclosed that 20 people were taken from Ruma village, 13 people from Dogon-fili, seven people from Durumi and 15 from Padogari, including a medical practitioner, simply identified as Garba, who the bandits have demanded N5 million for his release.

He stated while the bandits demanded N1 million each for the release of the 20 victims from Ruma and the 15 from Pandogari, the 13 victims from Dogon-fili were asked to bring N250, 000 each to regain their freedom. Our source said a 25-year-old herdsman in the area was attacked and killed, and all his cattle taken away by the rampaging gunmen.

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It was further gathered that five people from three different villages within Pandogari were set free by the gunmen after collecting N2 million ransom and a motorcycle before the latest attacks.

Our source also revealed that all the kidnap victims were suspected to have been taken to Kompanin-Doka forest, along Birinin–Gwari road, where every other victim abducted from the state was being held by the gunmen.

Following the continued onslaught by the gunmen in the affected villages, the people were said to have abandoned their farms despite the arrival of the rain for the planting season.

However, our source disclosed that though there were heavily armed security agents stationed at Allawa and Pandogeri communities, the bandits have concentrated their activities within the surrounding villages “because the security people do not go on patrol in these villages”.

Speaking further, he pointed out that “as I speak with you now, there are heavily armed security agents at Allawa and here in Pandogari, but they don't go for patrol in these villages.

They are just there in their camps while the bandits are busy wreaking havoc in the villages.

“It is the local vigilantes that usually go after the bandits, but they (vigilantes) are not as equipped as the bandits, regardless, the vigilantes, on most occasions, pushed the bandits back from the villages”.