

Again, gunmen attack Plateau, kill 11 youths

November 9, 2017 Musa Pam Jos



Eleven persons were reportedly killed and four others injured when gunmen opened fire on villagers returning from Rim-Dyem market in Riyom, Plateau State yesterday evening.

“The attack took place about 7:30 p.m. The villagers were returning home from a local market when gunmen waylaid them, killing 11 people instantly,” Mr. Terna Tyopev, Plateau Police Command said.

The police spokesman said that those injured had been taken to Christian Hospital, Vom.

“No arrest has been made, but we are already investigating the incident; we shall not rest until the attackers are fished out,” he said.

The victims, who were returning from the Makera market in a Golf-3 car, were reportedly ambushed by the assailants while offloading at Diyan junction near Gako village.

The assailants, who were said to be riding a Opel Vectra car, a source said, had trailed the victims from the Rim junction in Makera village where a military checkpoint is located.

It was, however, not clear who was responsible for the attack, although a survivor claimed he saw the attackers wearing army uniform.

Investigation revealed that there is tension in Diyan, Gako and other neighbouring communities of Rim, Jol, Hoss of Riyom Local Government Area of the state.

Chairman of Riyom LGA, Hon. Emmanuel Jugul, said most of the natives have been sacked from their ancestral land and forcefully taken over by the Fulani.

He said the natives were sacked from Mahanga and Gweva communities and their land and houses were taken over by the Fulani forcefully.

Tuesday’s attack is the latest in a series of violence visited on rural communities in Plateau, in the past few weeks.

Among communities that had come under heavy attacks are Wereh, Foron and Rim in Barkin Ladi Local Government, as well as Miango, Jebu, Taegbe and Ncha in Bassa Local Government.

The state, which suffered massive violence for more than a decade, enjoyed uninterrupted peace for two years before the gunmen returned in September.

The member representing Riyom Constituency in the Plateau State House of Assembly and Chairman, House Committee on Labour and Security, Hon. Daniel Dem, said the entire Local Government Area has been under siege.

“We have been under siege. Some weeks back, Fulani herdsmen complained that one of their members was killed, which we don’t know anything about and they said they were going to attack this community and they have taken the law into their hands.

“If somebody comes out clearly before the STF and said he is going to attack a community and nine youths were ambushed after a week and killed, that person should be arrested and interrogated. The heads of Fulani in Riyom should be arrested and interrogated by the Defence Headquarters. Enough of this mass killings,” the lawmaker said.

The Media Officer of OPSH, Captain Umar Adams, yesterday confirmed the attack.

He said the victims were ambushed while on their way from Makera Market in Riyom LGA.

He said the commander led the troops immediately to the scene and spent the night there trailing the attackers, but could not get any of them.

According to him, “The Task Force personnel were instantly mobilized to the scene on receipt of the information. By the time our troops arrived the scene, the attackers had fled, but we are still doing our ground work to see if we can trace and apprehend them.”

He said that the task force has deployed its helicopter there and was carrying out aerial surveillance, so as to track the attackers.

Adams denied the allegation that it was Fulani and soldiers that connived to carry out the attack, saying such allegation was unthinkable and can only come from mischief makers.

He, however, said they had launched their investigation into the attack and will make public their findings as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the Plateau State Governor, Simon Lalong, has condemned the killings.

Lalong, who spoke through his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Dan Manjang, at the scene of the incident, begged the Federal Government to empower state governors with the desired power to deploy security to troubled areas. He urged the Special Task Force (STF) to swing into action and unravel the culprits behind the killings with the view to prosecute them.

“The governor is the chief security of the state, but he does not have the power to deploy any security officer. A DPO is more powerful than the governor of the state. The power that is given to the Inspector-General of Police and the Chief of Defence Staff should be given to the state governors in the interest of the unity of Nigeria,” he said.

He called on the people to be calm and not to take law into their hands as government is working round the clock with security chiefs in the state to protect lives and properties.