

Gunmen attack Kogi community, kill 19

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Tawari community in Kogi Local Government Area of Kogi State, was yesterday morning thrown into agony and tension, following the alleged murder of 19 persons by suspected militia, who invaded the community the previous night.

But the Chief Administrator of Kogi Local Government Area, Musa Tanko Mohammed, confirmed that 19 persons died in the mid-night invasion.

The attack, it was learnt, was a reprisal by the militia.

Four suspected herdsmen, alleged to be kidnappers along Lokoja-Abuja federal highway were on Wednesday killed by security agencies, following a tip off by vigilantes from Tawari community.

It was gathered that militia who were said to be angry with the role played by the vigilantes in Tawari, which led to the killing of the alleged kidnappers, invaded the community in the midnight of Wednesday and killed defenceless persons in a gruesome manner.

The killing of the kidnappers terrorising motorists along the Lokoja-Abuja federal highway was said to have angered the militias, who alleged that the misfortune of their colleagues killed as suspected kidnappers was made possible by information from the Tawari community.

According to report, the kidnappers sometime last year had one of their members killed and his body mutilated by suspected ritual killers, but the militias pointed fingers at the Tawari community, threatening a

reprisal.

The palace of the third class chief of the community, Alhaji Idris Tawari, alongside several other houses in the area, were razed by the militia.

But following persistent pleas by the chief, against a reprisal, some suspected herdsmen lived in the community with their host community in peace until a few days ago when they started moving out en-masse.

Following efforts to pacify them and know the reason for the mass movement, the herdsmen explained that their movement was a way of life, assuring the people that it had no ulterior motives.

Eyewitness account put the dead at 23, but the administrator however confirmed 19 dead, describing the incident as most unfortunate. He assured people

that efforts were on to return life to normal.

As at the time of report, military personnel have been deployed in the community, while the Kogi State Commissioner of Police was on ground to monitor the situation and provide support.

In his reaction, the state's Commissioner of Police, Ede Ayuba Ekpeji, condemned the attacks on the people of Tawari community.

He condemned the attack in its entirety, while extending his message of condolence to the traditional ruler of Tawari, the entire community, the Kogi Local Government and Kogi State Government over the unfortunate incident.

While assuring the people of the community and the state in general of the Command's efforts to restore

normalcy to the area, the commissioner said he had deployed Special Forces, Federal Anti-Robbery Squad, Counter Terrorism Unit, Police Mobile Force, as well as the conventional Police in the area to forestall any breakdown of law and order.

He ordered the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of Investigation to commence investigation and unravel the cause of the attack.

He appealed to the law-abiding people of the state to volunteer useful, timely and credible information to the police and any other security agencies on the activities of criminal elements in the state.

Meanwhile, Governor Yahaya Bello has directed security agencies to fish out perpetrators of Tawari mid-night attack.

The governor in a state-

ment signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr Onogwu Muhammed, directed security agencies to swing into action and ensure those who carried out the dastardly act face the law.

The governor condemned the incident and warned that anyone who wanted to cause crisis in the state would have himself to blame, assuring the people that his administration would do everything to protect lives and property of the people in the state.

Bello, therefore, urged the people to be calm and law abiding, while assuring them of the determination of his administration to flush out bandits and criminals out of Kogi State.

Saturday Telegraph checks revealed that some people from the community out of fear are already relocating to a neighbouring community.