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Boko Haram: Residents Flee Borno Community to Niger

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Defence Hqs

By Michael Olugbode

The renewed onslaught by Boko Haram against the people of Borno State in recent times has forced hundreds of residents of Gashigar village, a border community between the state and Niger Republic to take refuge in the neighbouring country, after a series of attacks by suspected members of the Islamic sect which left 15 persons dead.

Both residents and security sources told journalists Sunday that the village is now deserted as there have been several attacks on it.

According to some of the residents, Gashigar, a fishing community that shares boundary with villages in Niger Republic, lost seven persons while over 60 shops and eight vehicles were razed during an attack by gunmen on Thursday night.

The villagers have complained that their cases were made worse by the absence of security agents in the community.

Authorities at the Borno State Police Command which confirmed the incident, however debunked the villagers' claim that there was no police presence in their area.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Gideon Jibrin, said: "It is not correct that we don't have police formation in Mobbar Local Government and surrounding villages. If their claim is true, then how come we are confirming the incident to you? The report got to the table of our state commissioner of police within the shortest possible time after it took place."

He added that apart from the seven persons that were killed, "three others who were running out of fear got drowned in the river."

The attack on Gashigar came about four days after a similar one was made on two neighbouring villages where the insurgents were believed to have attacked and killed five persons.

Alhaji Talba Gashigar, an immediate former vice-chairman of Mobbar Local Government Area, who was an eyewitness, told journalists that during last Thursday's attack, the gunmen began shooting sporadically and setting shops and vehicles ablaze.

He said: "Some gunmen invaded our town, driving three vehicles and many motorcycles. They drove straight to the market area and began shooting and setting shops ablaze. About eight cars were also burnt.

"We had to flee for our dear lives because the gunmen came in troops and there were no security personnel in our locality. We ran across the borders into the Camerounian villages but seven of our fellow villagers were shot dead; and over 60 houses and shops were also burnt down completely.

"They spent about two hours operating in the town. Unfortunately, our town has no security operative to protect us. We are in a state of fear and confusion now; we cannot sleep in the villages here on the Nigerian side. Once dusk begins to set in, everyone locks up and crosses the borders to Diffa. Most of us board our canoes and cross over the river boundary and passed the night in Diffa."

Gashigar, who came weekend to Maiduguri with some other residents of the attacked village, called on government to assist the local youth vigilante that are the current security force manning the area, to protect lives and property in the area.

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