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Francis Sardauna in Katsina

Suspected bandits yesterday killed 11 people and kidnapped five others in fresh attacks on Ungwar Sarki and Sharu villages in Faskari Local Government Area of Katsina State.

The criminals, according to residents of the affected villages, stormed Ungwar Sarki at about 12 o'clock and ransacked the village before moving to Sharu village last Wednesday.

A top government official in Faskari, who confirmed the incident in a telephone interview with THISDAY yesterday, said the hoodlums also injured scores of people and rustled unspecified number of cattle belonging to the residents during the invasion.

He said the mercenaries, riding on motorcycles, first attacked Ungwar Sarki, where they killed nine people, including children and women, and slaughtered two others in Sharu village before abducting five elderly people in the area.

The government official, who pleaded anonymity, said there were concerns the number of casualties in the two adjoining villages may be more than 11, as whereabouts of many residents were still unknown after the deadly invasion.

According to him, "Yesterday (Wednesday) at 12 midnight, some heavily armed criminals (bandits) attacked our two villages (Ungwar Sarki and Sharu). They killed nine people in Ungwar Sarki and injured many people in the village.

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"As if that was not enough, they moved to our neighbouring village (Sharu) where they killed two people and abducted five others who couldn't run during the attack. In all the villages they attacked, they rustled cattle and burnt down many houses."

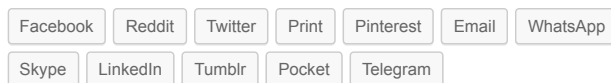
The source added: "We are still conducting headcount of the community members, and from what we have so far, there are concerns that more people may have lost their lives during the attacks."

"We are combing the forests nearby with the hope of finding those unaccounted for. Many people who fled the two villages had run into the forest, but we hope those alive will come out soon and be reunited with their loved ones."

The government officer, however, said security agents had been deployed in the areas to forestall breakdown of law and order, even as some residents are said to have fled the villages for the local government area headquarters.

However, the state Police Command was yet to respond to inquiry, as the state police spokesman, SP Gambo Isah, promised to brief journalists on the attacks, but could not as of press time.

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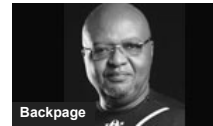
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