

# Villagers Flee as Bandits Kill 18, Burnt Houses in Katsina

## ● *Call for my resignation is absurd, says Masari*

**Francis Sardauna** in Katsina

Gunmen suspected to be bandits and rode on motorcycles launched a fresh onslaught on Duba village in Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina State, killing no fewer than 18 persons, including children and women.

THISDAY reliably gathered that many other residents sustained gunshot wounds in the incident that lasted from 9pm to 10:45pm on Saturday, while many survivors have fled the village.

This, however, came at the time Governor Aminu Bello Masari of the state, has described those calling for his resignation over his recent call on residents of the state to acquire arms and defend themselves as absurd.

But on the new attacks, investigations have further revealed that the bandits numbering over 300, and armed with sophisticated weapons including anti-aircraft launchers and GMP machine guns, set many houses, shops

and foodstuffs ablaze during the invasion.

A vigilante member, who craved anonymity, told THISDAY in a telephone interview on Sunday that the hoodlums killed 18 people on the spot and injured scores in the village.

He said: "Yesterday (Saturday) over 300 bandits armed with sophisticated weapons including anti-aircraft launchers and GMP machine guns attacked our village (Duba) and killed 18 persons.

"They (bandits) injured more than 10 people, including children and women, who were sleeping when the bandits arrived the village. Those killed were buried on Sunday according to Islamic rites".

The source noted that hundreds of residents, mostly women and children, who survived the deadly invasion, had fled the village to Batsari, the headquarters of Batsari Local Government Area for fear of a reoccurrence.

The Katsina State Police Public

Relations Officer, Gambo Isah, however, told journalists that the bandits killed only 12 people and injured six others in the community.

He explained that the joint team of the police and the military went to the village but the bandits retreated to the forest by the time the security personnel arrived the scene.

Isah, a Superintendent of Police said, "The bandits, numbering over three hundred and armed with sophisticated weapons including GMP machine guns and anti-aircraft launchers stormed the village (Duba) at 20:45 p.m on Saturday.

"They (bandits) ransacked houses and looted shops. They also killed 12 people and injured six others. Our officers are still combing the forest with a view to finding the hoodlums."

But, Masari, in a statement by his Director-General on Media, Abdu Labaran Malumfashi, said security was on the exclusive list of the Nigerian Constitution, which

means it was exclusively a federal government affair.

The governor was reacting to resignation calls by the Katsina State chapter of the Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state.

The statement read: "In matters of security, a governor is the Chief Security Officer of his state only in name, because the various security chiefs working in the state take orders not from him, but from their superiors in Abuja.

"The only things they take from governors are the financial and material assistance (both solicited and unsolicited), which they extend to the security institutions in the states.

"The massive increase in the number of security formations in Katsina State, and the North West in general, was due to the dogged commitment and determination of Governor Masari to see to the successful prosecution of the war against banditry.

"As constitutionally elected office holders, Governors do not succumb to the intimidation of some self-serving disgruntled elements, masquerading as human rights campaigners by resigning.

"If they are found wanting in the discharge of their responsibilities, the Nigerian Constitution has provided the protocols for easing them out of office, and no house of assembly is in the dark about that.

"Masari is not the first Governor to make the suggestion. In states where the citizens do not politicise security issues, they rally round their leaders who had similarly admonished their people.

"Therefore, to suggest that Governor Masari should resign for his patriotic candor and courage in admonishing his people to wake up and resist the bandits by acquiring arms for self defence, betrays a sheer lack of the understanding of the letter and spirit as well as the workings of the Nigerian Constitution, or a motive which is anything but altruistic."