

Plateau killings unsettle Ondo

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- Akeredolu calls for calm
- Presidency condemns attack
- Military arrests 12 suspects, steps up security patrol

By Dayo Johnson, Johnbosco Agbakwuru & Marie-Theresa Nanlong

News of the killing of some travellers by “hoodlums” in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State is unsettling Ondo State.

Reason: The victims were said to be natives of Ondo travelling through Plateau.

Their destination was not clear at press time but the tension the killing generated in Ondo forced Governor Rotimi Akeredolu to issue a statement, yesterday, suing for calm.

15 corpses of some of the victims were reportedly deposited in a morgue in Plateau.

The military confirmed the killing of some commuters travelling through Rukuba Road area of Jos North LGA when “hoodlums” blocked the road and launched attack on their vehicle.

The military added that many of the commuters with varying degree of injuries were evacuated to a medical facility for care while announcing that 12 suspects had been arrested in connection with the incident.

On his part, Governor Simon Lalong warned troublemakers bent on fomenting trouble in Plateau to desist as government will not allow any form of lawlessness.

Suspected hoodlums

Major Ishaku Takwa, Information Officer of Operation Safe Haven, who confirmed the killings in a statement, said, “Troops of Operation SAFE HAVEN earlier today swiftly responded to distress calls that suspected hoodlums blocked Jos North Junction along Rukuba Road in Jos North local government area and attacked some commuters. Troops immediately mobilized to the scene and restored normalcy.

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“Some persons, including commuters, lost their lives in the unfortunate incident while others with varying degree of injuries have been evacuated to a medical facility for care. Their condition is being closely monitored. 12 suspects have so far been arrested in connection with the incident and troops are on the trail of others who took part in perpetrating the heinous act. Those arrested are currently in custody for interrogation.

“The Commander, Operation SAFE HAVEN, Major General Ibrahim Ali, appealed to the people to volunteer credible information that would lead to the arrest of other suspects currently at large. General Ali also appealed for calm and urged law abiding citizens to continue with their lawful activities without any fear of intimidation. Meanwhile, security patrols have been stepped-up in Jos Metropolis to maintain peace and security.”

Trouble makers

Lalong, on his part, warned “trouble makers bent on fomenting trouble in Plateau State to desist as the Government will not allow any form of lawlessness to disrupt the peace of the State.”

He condemned the act and immediately directed security agencies to swiftly identify and arrest the perpetrators while dominating the area to restore calm.

“The attacks on innocent citizens no matter their backgrounds will never be tolerated in Plateau State and those who are found to be behind such attacks will be dealt with decisively to serve as

deterrence and restore public order,” the governor said in a statement.

Case of mistaken identity

A statement by Akeredolu’s Chief Press Secretary, Richard Olatunde, in Akure, Ondo State capital, said the attack was “a case of mistaken identity”.

The statement read: “Ondo State Governor, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, SAN, just a few hours ago, received the unfortunate report of the Plateau State tragedy where some people believed to be indigenes of Ondo State were attacked.

“An unconfirmed number of deaths are believed to have been recorded while some are severely injured in the said attack. Their true identity will soon be unraveled.

“The Governor says from report he received from his brother Governor in Plateau, the incident was a case of mistaken identity.

“The victims, according to preliminary reports, took a route where crisis between Muslims and Northern Christians had ensued for some time, and that they may have been possibly, mistaken for aggressors. “Accordingly, either of the two feuding groups in the area could be responsible in this regard.

“Governor Akeredolu hereby calls for calm among the people of the state, urging that nobody should take law into their hands.

“He particularly, urges the people to refrain from any hasty colouration of the unfortunate incident.

“I have spoken with my brother Governor in Plateau, and he has assured me that the situation is under control.

“I want to plead with our people to remain calm. From the report I gathered, it is clear some were killed while many others who are injured have been taken to the hospital for medical attention.

“Let me again, make it clear that I was informed by my colleague that it was indeed, a case of mistaken identity. I want to assure our people living in Plateau that they are not targets of any religion or ethnic crisis.

“While assuring that justice will be served, I want to plead again that we do not take law into our hands. Let us remain calm.

“I also want to commiserate with the family of all those who have lost their lives in this unfortunate incident. We mourn the departed and feel the pains of their loved ones”.

The governor assured indigenes of Ondo living outside the state of his commitment to their safety.

Presidency condemns attacks on travellers

Meanwhile, the Presidency, last night, condemned the Plateau attack, disclosing, that the travellers, from a religious event in Bauchi, were passing through Jos, and regretted the reported deaths of at least twenty-two persons with several others injured in that ambush on their travelling party”.

The condemnation was contained in a statement issued by the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Mallam Garba Shehu.

The statement read in part: “It is widely known that Plateau State has been one of the states affected by herder-farmer clashes, which have, in a significant way, been curtailed following the intense peace-building efforts of the administration of Governor Simon Lalong.

“However, to be clear, this is not an agriculturalist-on-pastoralist confrontation – but rather a direct, brazen and wickedly motivated attack on members of a community exercising their rights to travel freely and to follow the faith of their choosing.

“With the evident preparedness of their attackers, it is clear this was a well-conceived and prearranged assault on a known target, location and religious persuasion of the travellers not an opportunist ambush”.