

Bandits kill in Zamfara villages, kidnap over 33 women

● Zamfara elders raise alarm over release of arrested bandits

By Ibrahim Hassan-Wuyo, with agency report

BANDITS have again kidnapped over 33 women, following attacks in 15 villages within the neighbourhood of Gusau, the capital of Zamfara State.

Most of the men in the village were killed.

This came as a group of elder statesmen in Zamfara State raised the alarm over the alleged indiscriminate release of arrested bandits and their collaborators by the authorities in the state, as they urged the law enforcement agencies to stop the act, citing it as one of the factors responsible for the escalation of the insecurity in the state.

According to a BBC Hausa report, some locals in Geba and Gidan Kaura villages, and others in communities within the Gusau LGA of Zamfara State, said the bandits invaded their communities, killed men and destroyed property.

"The bandits kidnapped women, girls and took them away," they said.

One of the locals said: "The bandits kidnapped 10 women in Kura; at Bayauri, they kidnapped nine. They also entered a village called Gana and kidnapped seven before proceeding to Duma and kidnapped another seven. These happened before Sunday morning."

According to reports, many villages have been deserted, even as many of the villagers migrated to the state capital, Gusau.

A local, who was migrating to Gusau, said they've now ran away to the Damba community inside the Zamfara State capital, Gusau.

"We have women, children and the pregnant ones, there is no food. If you see where they sleep in this cold, as if there is no government," a local residing in Damba community alleged.

State Commissioner of Information, Ibrahim Dosara, however, confirmed the attack in Geba. He explained that shortly after the bandits attacked, security agents went to rescue the situation.

He said: "There are soldiers working in that zone, they went to Geba. They met three people injured, the soldiers dispersed the bandits."

He said it was not true that while the villages were being attacked, they were not visited by security agents on rescue mission.

The attacks in Zamfara came at a time the authorities announced

that security agents have arrested some bandits that were earlier dislodged in their hideouts, who went to a medical facility for treatment.

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The elder statesmen in the state raised the alarm at a meeting in Gusau, the state capital, where they recommended the revitalisation of community-based associations to generate funds for the establishment of primary and secondary schools, to offer free education to orphans, who lost their parents as a result of banditry, in a bid to prevent a reoccurrence of such incidents.

A former member of the National Assembly, who represented Zamfara Central constituency, Senator Saidu Dansadau, who briefed journalists on behalf of the group at the end of the meeting, said: "The committee expresses its dismay and disappointment for indiscriminate release of criminals by the authorities, who either arrest them or to whom the criminals are handed over when they are arrested by the military, vigilante group, or any other security organisation."

"We appeal to the law enforcement agencies in the state to, for the sake of God, have a paradigm shift from this indiscriminate release of criminals and resort to arraigning the criminals in the court of law because the meeting identified this indiscriminate and incessant release of criminals as one of the immediate causes of the escalation of criminality in the state."

Dansadau acknowledged that the security situation in the state has improved significantly following the shutdown of telecom services.

He, however, said that places such as Birnin Magaji, Shinkafi, and Zurmi Local Government Areas still face incessant attacks by bandits.

Members of the group comprise traditional rulers, religious leaders, senior citizens, and some political office holders, who came together to discuss how to mobilise Muslims and Christians to pray for the return of peace, and to support the government to succeed in the fight against banditry in Zamfara.