

VOICE

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Natives cower in fear as terrorists unleash more attacks in Kaduna

By Ibrahim Hassan, Kaduna

FOR the people of Birnin-Gwari in Kaduna State, it is a short-lived joy. When the activities of criminal elements in the area temporarily came to a halt some weeks ago, they heaved a sigh of relief, thinking that the era of the evil men who killed, kidnapped, and destroyed for their selfish interests had ended. With an air of certainty, they thought they could return to their homes and begin farming in their respective communities. But they were wrong. The honeymoon did not last long when the terrorists returned in full to their duty posts and began to unleash onslaughts on their victims with even more brutality. Alas! The bandits have now returned to the area in full force, blocking the hitherto ever-busy Kaduna-Birnin-Gwari Road for days and kidnapping many citizens for ransom.

While the locals in Birnin-Gwari put the number of persons kidnapped by terrorists at 40 when they recently took over the road, the spokesman for the Kaduna Police Command, Mr Rilwan Hassan, has disputed the figure, claiming that government had intensified efforts to smoke out the daredevils. The police claim notwithstanding, the Birnin-Gwari Emirate Peoples Union, BEPU, through its official, Ishaq Kasai, has regretted that motorists and other commuters have since deserted the road, which was the shortest route from the North to the South-West, for fear of their lives.

The locals observed that the arrangement whereby security posts along that route were erected far from one another had given terrorists leeway to launch corridor attacks and kidnap travellers at will, without any resistance. Although other communities in the state have also witnessed the renewed onslaught by bandits, such as the gruesome killing of Muslim worshippers in a mosque at the Suya community of Ikara Local Government Area, the worst hit communities are in Southern Kaduna. It will be recalled that in a night attack on a church in Southern Kaduna, which Governor Uba Sani alleged could be a sinister plot to cause religious crisis, the suspected bandits razed an entire rectory, and as the Catholic priests were running for their lives, a young seminarian among them was not that lucky and was burned alive.

These two incidents in Ikara LGA in Southern Kaduna have made the visibly angry governor charge security operatives to hunt down the perpetrators and bring them to book. Professor Ishaya Kato Auta, President of the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union, SOKAPU, condemned in strong terms the barbaric attacks and killings of scores of their people without any justification. While chronicling the series of attacks on Southern Kaduna in recent times, Professor Auta said: "On August 28, 2023, Mr. Danlami Degara (Sarkin Bakin Kogin Kero) in Gana Ward of Lere LGA was gruesomely murdered at his residence. The following day, August 29, 2023, one Mr. Jefferson Nyongoro Bitrus was also brutally killed by unknown gunmen at his house in Geshere Ward, Kaura LGA."

"On September 4, 2023, the corpse of a young man was seen by the roadside



Victims of bandits' attacks in Kaduna

at Makyal village, Kaduna-Kachia Road. Just last week, eight people were kidnapped and one person killed at Yaji in Kachia LGA; more than ten people along Kachia Road; and nine people, including women and children, in Rimi Kamazou in Chikun LGA of the same Kaduna State, were recklessly kidnapped, just to mention but a few. And just last Thursday, September 7, 2023, a group of armed terrorists invaded Fadan Kamantan, a community in Zangon Katar Local Government Area of Kaduna State, and attacked the residence of the Catholic Priest, Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Okolo, where the entire rectory was set ablaze. Unfortunately, a seminarian by the name of Na'aman Ngole Danladi, who was completing his training into the Catholic priesthood, was burned to death by the fire.

"With sharp pains in our hearts, SOKAPU condemns in strong terms these barbaric attacks on our peaceful communities, killings of innocent souls, and kidnappings of scores of our people. We are appalled by the sudden resurgence of terrorism and violence against innocent citizens in Southern Kaduna. For the past three weeks now, Lere, Chikun, Atyap, and other LGAs have experienced different degrees of assassinations, kidnappings, and assaults on our people. We see these dastardly, cowardly, and callous acts of banditry in all their ramifications as a direct affront to the constituted authorities, which must not be allowed to continue. We, therefore, call on government at all levels and the security agencies to quickly come to the aid of our people in Southern Kaduna. We sympathise with the immediate families and friends of the victims and the entire Catholic community in Fadan Kamantan, Kafanchan Diocese, and Southern Kaduna at this tragic moment."

Kaduna State Governor Uba Sani, who is saddened by the renewed wave of attacks in the Birnin-Gwari axis of the state, has already approved the recruitment of thousands of youth as members of the Kaduna Vigilance Service to be trained to assist the security operatives in fighting the criminals. In a statement by his spokesman,

Mohammed Lawal Shehu, Sani expressed the fear that the heightened attacks could be the work of elements trying to ignite ethnic and religious tensions in Kaduna State and sabotage the government's efforts towards rebuilding trust in the communities. "I am deeply saddened by the attack on Fadan Kamantan Parish, Zangon Katar. This act of violence against innocent worshippers is not only an attack on the Catholic community but also an attempt to set our people against each other. We will not tolerate such acts of brutality and will go to any length within the law to bring the attackers to book," he said.

While urging the security agencies to swiftly investigate the incident and ensure that the culprits are arrested and made to face the full wrath of the law, Governor Sani expressed his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and assured them of the state government's support during this difficult time. The governor said his administration has taken proactive steps to restore peace in troubled communities by strengthening partnerships with federal security agencies and reinvigorating the Kaduna Vigilance Service with the recruitment of no fewer than 7000 persons. For the Christian Association of Nigeria in Kaduna State, what is

Court nullifies Kaduna govt's banishment of monarch

By Ibrahim Hassan, Kaduna

KADUNA State High Court sitting in Kaduna, has nullified former Governor Nasir el-Rufai's banishment of the paramount ruler of Piriga Chiefdom in Lere Local Government Area, LGA, of the state, Chief Jonathan Parguwa Zamana.

While delivering judgement on the case of breach of fundamental rights, Justice Nasiru Sadiq of the Kaduna High Court sitting in Kafanchan, said the banishment ran contrary to section 41, subsection 1 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). According to the Judge, the Constitution which stated that every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to move freely and to reside in any part thereof, and no citizen of Nigeria shall be expelled from Nigeria or refused entry thereby or exit therefrom.

The court had three weeks ago, nullified similar restriction of movement order placed on the deposed traditional ruler of Arak Chiefdom in Sanga LGA, Brigadier General Iluya Yammah (retd). It also ordered the Kaduna State government to pay Chief Yammah N5 million damages for breach of Fundamental Rights. Recall that the immediate past governor of Kaduna State, el-Rufai had on May 22, 2023 announced the deposition of the two paramount rulers, stating that "the depositions followed recommendations from the Ministry of Local Government Affairs in line with the provisions of Section 11 of the Traditional Institutions Law No. 21 of 2021." The deposition was contained in a statement signed by the then Commissioner for Local Government Affairs, Hajiya Umma Ahmad.

While reacting to the court's ruling, the Lead Counsel to Chief Zamana, Napoleon Idenala expressed satisfaction, even though he was dismayed that the defendants did not appear in court or counter any of the applicant's claims given that a high court sitting at Kafanchan, recently, had declared a similar action of the government as illegal and void. Napoleon lamented the trauma the deposed chief suffered since the banishment order was placed on him, saying the monarch lost his wife, brother and sister within a space of four months. He, however, reserved comment on whether to appeal the refusal of the court to award any damages despite seeking N250 million damages, even though the court found that there was no defence and the claimant's fundamental right had been breached.

Idenala recalled that Chief Zamana had been on house arrest, noting that: "Someone need to be in his shoes before he can understand the magnitude of trauma the royal father was going through under the house arrest he has been subjected to. It was barely three weeks after his wife of over 40 years died when the government announced his deposition. While under house arrest, his younger brother took ill and was admitted to an hospital in Abuja; the government denied him permission to visit him; when he later died July, still he was denied permission to see his dead body."

Why I'll challenge nullification of my election—Solomon Lar's Daughter

THE Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, member of the House of Representatives representing Langtang North/South Federal Constituency, Plateau State Ben Lar, has vowed to challenge the decision of the National Assembly Election Petition Tribunal to overturn her election on the allegation that the PDP did not have a recognised structure to have nominated her for the election. Ms Lar contended that the tribunal went out of the recognised law that forbids non-participants in a primary to interfere in the nomination of a candidate.

Even more, Lar said that the issue taken to the tribunal was a pre-election matter which was outside the remit of

the Justice Mohammed Tukur-led tribunal. Lar further disclosed that the decisions of the Justice Tukur-led panel were out of sync with the second tribunal sitting in the same venue which has refused to meddle into the nomination of candidates of the PDP. The Justice Tukur tribunal has so far nullified the election of 15 persons in Plateau elected on the platform of the PDP, starting from Senator Napoleon Baki.

Asserting that the PDP candidates were validly nominated, she said: "As you know, the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal, PEPT, in the case of APM vs Shettima said that the issue of nomination or sponsorship by any party

can only be brought before the court according to the 2023 Electoral Act by a person who is an aspirant or who contested with the candidate. Any other political party is disqualified from doing so. So on what basis is APC or any other party, LP, APC suing us on a pre-election matter? To the understanding of every lay man who knows that the provision of the Electoral Act that the tribunal can only restrict itself to post-election matters. All pre-election matters, including nomination and sponsorship, are pre-election matters and that they are not to be handled by the tribunal, they are to be handled months before now."