

Scores killed in Plateau communities, security agencies silent



By Marie-Therese Nanlong

Jos – A fresh wave of violence has engulfed communities in Kanam Local Government Area of Plateau State, with reports suggesting that no fewer than 70 members of a vigilance group were killed in a clash with suspected bandits.

The incident, which occurred on Monday afternoon, has left residents in fear, even as security agencies remain tight-lipped.

Despite multiple attempts to reach Operation Safe Haven (OpSH), the Plateau State Police Command, and the acting head of Operation Rainbow, none of the security officials responded to calls placed through their known numbers, leaving many questions unanswered in the wake of the tragedy.

The attack, which reportedly happened between 2:00 and 3:00 pm in the Bunyun and Kukawa communities, occurred as vigilante members from Wase LGA were said to be heading towards a known bandit hideout in the forest reserve that borders Bauchi and Taraba States.

According to an account, a group identifying itself as “Hulabe” vigilantes, numbering over 300 and mounted on motorcycles, stormed Kukawa under the pretext of fighting bandits.

However, their actions soon turned violent as they looted shops, fired shots to disperse residents, and carted away items, including 19 motorcycles and goods worth millions of naira.

A community leader, Kukawa, Malam Ismail Isa, expressed concern over the rising spate of lawlessness, stating “The so-called anti-bandit fighters are now engaging in theft and harassment of peaceful villagers. This is unacceptable and worrisome.

“The Hulabe vigilantes claimed to be a combined force from Plateau, Taraba, and other neighbouring States, but their activities suggest otherwise.”

Conflicting reports continue to trail the incident. While some accounts put the death toll at over 70, others caution that the exact number of casualties is yet to be confirmed.

“You would recall that the media reported no fewer than 70 vigilantes were killed in a clash with bandits around Kukawa and Bunyun, but these figures remain unverified,” the community leader said.

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“What we know is that there was an ambush as the vigilantes were heading to a known bandit enclave. The terrain makes confirmation difficult for now; we are awaiting the outcome of the ongoing findings,” he added.

Despite the gravity of the situation, there has been no official statement from State or federal security agencies. The silence has further compounded the fear and uncertainty in the affected communities.

Stakeholders, including lawmakers in the State Assembly, are calling for a coordinated response to end recurring violence, especially in the Wase and Kanam local government areas.