

Criminal Attacks in Kaduna State: 134 People killed, 56 People Injured and 112 Others Abducted Between March 20 to 30, 2022¹.

BACKGROUND



Pic 1.1 : Map of Kaduna State, Nigeria⁷

- Kaduna State's security crisis revolves around three different but overlapping threats. The first relates to the farmer-herder conflict, while the second threat comes from armed bandit groups engaged in criminal activities including kidnapping for ransom, arms dealing and cattle rustling. The third threat emanates from violent extremism following the re-emergence of Ansaru terrorist group in 2020². These security threats have resulted in huge humanitarian crisis including human casualties, internal displacements, loss of livelihoods and disruption in agricultural activities.
- The 2021 annual security report in Kaduna State revealed a total of 1,192 fatalities and 891 injured victims from armed banditry, communal clashes, and other violent attacks across the State. Out of the total fatalities (1,192), 1,038 were males, 104 females and 50 children. 2021 recorded a rise in casualty figures compared to 2020 which recorded 937 deaths³.
- Additionally, 3,348 people including 2,023 males, 985 females and 340 children were abducted in 2021. The statistics also revealed a significant increase compared to the 1,972 abducted victims recorded in 2020 in Kaduna State. Also, there were 45 victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) particularly rape, perpetrated by armed bandits in 2021 in Kaduna State. Out of the 45 victims, 29 were children⁴.
- Similar attacks by armed bandits at the Kaduna State International airport and railway track were recorded in 2021. On March 6 and 14, 2021, suspected armed bandits attacked the Kaduna Airport Junior Staff Quarters' and abducted 12 people⁵. Also, on October 20, 2021, the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) suspended the Abuja-Kaduna train services following a bomb explosion on the rail track⁶.

INCIDENT PROFILE

The week-long spate of criminal attacks in Kaduna State resulted in another major attack on March 28, 2022, against the Abuja-Kaduna-bound train conveying about 390 travellers. The attack is believed to have been orchestrated by suspected armed bandits around Kateri-Rijana Axis in Dutse Village, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State. The bandits reportedly detonated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on the rail track, which immobilized the train coupled with gunshots fired at passengers⁸. As of March 30, 2022, 8 people including 2 females were reported dead, 46 people injured with several others abducted in the incident⁹. However, the actual statistics of abducted victims is yet to be determined.

A chronology of violent incidents in Kaduna State within the reviewed period revealed incidents of armed violence by suspected bandits, militia herders and reprisal attacks by community youths in Giwa, Zaria, Igabi, Zango-Katakf and Kaura LGAs of the State. Between March 22 and 30, 2022, a cumulative total of 91 people were reportedly killed, 112 abducted and 3 others injured in coordinated attacks carried out by suspected armed bandits in Kaduna State¹⁰. On March 30, 2022, armed bandits reportedly abducted 6 people including an official of the Nigeria Custom Service (NCS) at Kofar Gayan in Zaria LGA¹¹, while 23 people were killed and several others injured in coordinated attacks by bandits in Anguwar Maiwa and Anguwar Kanwa Villages of Giwa LGA on March 29, 2022¹². Similarly, 15 people were also killed by bandits at Hayin Kanwa Village in Giwa LGA on March 27, 2022¹³.

Also, the attack by bandits at the Kaduna International Airport in Igabi LGA on March 26, 2022, that led to the killing of a staff of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) generated increased conversations regarding the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in protecting the citizenry and critical state infrastructures¹⁴. In a related development, suspected armed bandits killed 50 people with over 100 others (including women and children) abducted at Unguwar Kaya, Fatika, Barebare, Dillalai, Zango Tama, Unguwar Bakko, Gidan Alhajin Kadi, Kadanya and Duromi Villages of Giwa LGA on March 25, 2022¹⁵. The attackers also burnt down 200 houses, 32 shops and 50 vehicles with over 100 cows rustled in the incident. On the same day of March 25, three (3) people reportedly sustained injuries following the explosion of an IED at Yazufa Junction in Danmani Community of Igabi LGA¹⁶. Similar bandits' attack was also recorded at Kwanan Janruwa Area along Buruku-Birnin Gwari Road of Kaduna State resulting in the abduction of 6 people including 2 females¹⁷. However, the swift response of police operatives led to the rescue of the abducted victims.

Several other violent attacks by suspected militia herders and reprisal attacks in Agban and Maraban Kagoro Community in Kaura LGA of Kaduna State led to the death of 37 people and 7 others injured with two herders' settlements in Zauru and Kurdan Villages of Zango-Katakf LGA burnt down in the incident on March 20, 2022¹⁸. Out of the total fatalities (37) were two operatives of the Operation Safe Haven (OPS), 8 females and 2 children. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the attack was in reprisal to avenge the killing of a herder and 30 cows by community youths in the Kaura LGA¹⁹.

RISK ANALYSIS:

The escalation of violence on critical infrastructures by armed groups especially with the recent coordinated attacks at the Kaduna airport and train has generated increased tension and reignited concern about public safety considering the myriads of security challenges in the country. In addition to the recurring threat of banditry in Kaduna State, the vulnerability of communities to communal crises shrouded by ethno-religious undertones further compounds the fragility of the State. Alongside its dire humanitarian costs, its attendant effects on peaceful co-existence, political stability and socio-economic development are also a cause for concern. The railway facilitates economic growth globally, the Abuja-Kaduna rail route is not an exception. It has so far sprung up about 30 new informal economic activities and created jobs for about 50,000 people²⁰. However, the cost implication of the damage on the train and rail route was estimated at over 3 billion naira (about \$7,215,874)²¹. According to the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Rotimi Ameachi, the loss is equivalent to the cost of procuring digital security apparatus to avert the incidents²².

The upsurge of security challenges in the State has continued to raise concerns regarding the perceived inactions by the government on early warning signals from relevant stakeholders. This is evident considering the previous attacks on both the rail tracks and Kaduna International Airport in March and October 2021, respectively. The recurrent insecurity in Kaduna State is partly ascribed to large ungoverned spaces around the forests of Kamuku and Kuduru in Birnin Gwari and Giwa Local Government Areas (LGAs) that offer quick retreat and buffer for attacks and raids²³. These forests are the two deadliest bandit enclaves in the Northwest that straddles Niger, Zamfara, Kebbi, Katsina and Sokoto States²⁴. Rural communities around these areas remain prone to attacks resulting in fatalities, internal displacements, kidnapping, gender based and sexual violence and the disruption of the rural economy.

The unabated operations of criminal gangs in some volatile areas have led to the emergence of local security outfits (vigilante) to defend and protect the communities. This security gap is also indicative of the dearth of security presence and inadequate security surveillance and monitoring/local security intelligence across government infrastructures and violence-prone communities considering the vast territory. Moreover, the reactionary approach of security operatives in countering armed violence has also been cited a major factor fuelling these attacks. Likewise, military operations against armed groups in other volatile communities have dispersed some of the criminal elements to Kaduna State. A review of reported violent incidents and killings in 2021 showed that Kaduna State is the second least insecure State in Nigeria following Zamfara State²⁵. The reasons are attributed to large number of ungoverned spaces, deep-rooted ethno-religious conflicts, and the unrelenting official position of the State Government towards the military approach to addressing the challenges of insecurity.

MECHANISMS FOR INTERVENTIONS:

- To prevent the recurrent violent conflicts among communities in Kaura, Jema'a and Zango-Kataf LGAs of Kaduna State, the State Government has constituted a joint committee to investigate the immediate and remote causes of communal crisis and recommend sustainable measures to be undertaken by both Government and various ethnic groups in the LGAs for peaceful co-existence²⁶.
- Also, to curb the spread of violence to other communities and avert further loss of lives and livelihoods, the Kaduna State Government has imposed a 24-hour-curfew in Jema'a and Kaura LGAs of the State. Additionally, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Kaura LGA are currently taking refuge at Isa Muhammed LEA Primary School in Kafanchan Area, Jema'a LGA of Kaduna State²⁷.
- Following the armed attack by bandits, the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has suspended train services between Abuja and Kaduna²⁸. Similarly, flight operations by Azman Air and Air Peace have been suspended to Kaduna International Airport²⁹ in a bid to ensure maximum safety of equipment, staff and passengers are fully guaranteed.
- As part of measures to prevent criminal attacks on critical infrastructures, President Mohammadu Buhari, has directed the immediate conclusion of all processes for the implementation of the integrated security surveillance and monitoring solution for the Abuja-Kaduna and Lagos-Ibadan railway line. Additionally, the Presidency has directed the Nigerian Railway Corporation management to speedily repair the damaged rail tracks and resume daily services without delay³⁰.
- On-the-spot assessments of the affected areas by the Kaduna State Governor, Minister of Transportation, Nigerian Army and the Kaduna State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs to ascertain the extent of damages with the view to provide relief services for affected victims.

In addition to the increased security deployment in volatile areas of the State, the counter offensive operations of the Nigerian Army neutralized 12 suspected armed bandits involved in the March 26, 2022, attack on the Kaduna Airport³¹.

- Although the statistics of kidnapped/missing persons from the train attack is yet to be determined, security operatives have begun search-and-rescue operations of abducted victims including persons abducted in Giwa, Birnin-Gwari and Zaria LGAs of the State.
- The Kaduna State Governor, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, argues that the forests be 'carpet-bombed'³² as an option to end banditry and rural crimes in the State. This has generated mixed reactions due to its negative impact on the eco-system and the surrounding communities. Some observers are of the opinion that the underlying factors and drivers of the conflict be adequately addressed to promote peaceful co-existence and social cohesion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The State and Local Governments in collaboration with traditional and religious institutions, women and youth groups, media and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should continue to strengthen inter and intra-ethnic and religious dialogue and mediation in communities as part of the long-term resilience strategies to assuage communal violence and foster social cohesion in affected communities of the State.
- Due to the existence of large unregulated and poor government-controlled forest areas in the country, the Federal and State Government should constantly strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies in intelligence gathering and surveillance to prevent the recurring armed violence in Kaduna State. This should be complemented with strengthening community policing to bolster security in communities.
- The State and Local Governments in collaboration with the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other humanitarian agencies should increase support for affected victims, especially displaced persons in terms of access to health, psychosocial and livelihoods assistance to rebuild their lives.

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