

# Surge in killings, kidnapping: FG, security agencies under pressure

Since the beginning of April 2026, Nigeria has been bleeding. Communities have been sacked, worshippers gunned down, travelers abducted and soldiers felled in battle. From the forests of the North-West to the highways of the North-Central, South-East, South-South, and South-West, as well as the insurgency zones of the North-East, death moved freely, and fear followed closely behind. The statistics, between April 1 and April 21, 2026, told the story of a nation in a race against its own geography. Hundreds of people have either been killed or abducted into the vast ungoverned spaces. On April 2 in Kaduna, gunmen stormed Unguwar Sabon-Titi and abducted 10 persons. Families were dragged out under cover of darkness. As reported, there was no resistance, and no rescue. By April 3, Nasarawa State was in flames as 12 persons were killed, 52 houses burnt and over 2,500 people displaced. The attack took place at Udege Kasa and Akyawa. It was reported that an entire community was reduced to rubble in hours. Those who escaped fled with nothing; no food, no shelter, no certainty.

Plateau State also bled quietly on April 3 as three persons were killed. It was an attack on Nyamgo Gyel in a late-night raid. Bandits struck Kachia in Kaduna again on April 4, and abducted five siblings, including a toddler. The following day, which was April 5, and the Easter Sunday, 15 persons were reportedly massacred in Kujuru in Kaduna, apart from 31 persons believed to have been abducted. Gunmen reportedly moved from house to house, while church services were ongoing. On the same Easter Sunday, gunmen also invaded Mbalom in Gwer East of Benue State. Seventeen worshippers were killed inside a church. The altar was turned into a killing ground. Witnesses recalled gunfire echoing through the sanctuary as worshippers were trapped, and prayers turned to screams. Investigation revealed that the death toll during the Easter week was between 60 and 80, while more than 70 persons were abducted, and thousands were displaced.

Niger State was also attacked on April 7. The Erena village in Shiroro came under heavy attack. At least 50 villagers were reportedly killed. On the same April 7, civil society data suggested that at least 1,402 Nigerians had been killed nationwide between January and April, 2026, while 1,800 people were abducted during the same period. April 10 came with the killing of 12 persons in Sokoto. The specific number of people that were abducted was not given. As gathered, villagers

were also forced to pay levies or face annihilation or death. Insecurity was also well pronounced on April 11 in Zamfara State as 21 persons were dispatched to their early graves by bandits for their refusal to pay bandits, paying with their lives. Then, April 11 was the day the sky rained death at Jilli Market in Yobe State. It was a day the military launched airstrike against bandits, who have been using the market as their safe haven. Scores of people were killed during the airstrike and dozens were injured. Some media houses reported that 56 persons lost their lives, while some sections of the media put the casualty figures around 100. Authorities said most of the casualties were insurgents and their sympathizers. But some civil society groups insisted the victims were civilians. In Kwara State, between April 4 and 6, bandits raided Oro-Ago and Babanla forests in Ifelodun Local Government Area. It was a three-day clearance. They attacked several farming settlements on the fringes of the Oro-Ago forest.

Six people were killed, including two local hunters, while 11



persons were marched into the deep forest. Also on the Eiyenkorin-Afon-Ogele Axis of Kwara Central, gunmen intercepted a commercial bus on April 12, along the Eiyenkorin-Afon Road in the Asa Local Government Area. Five passengers were kidnapped. This incident caused a massive protest by local residents, who blocked the road on April 13. Also on April 19, bandits invaded a residence in Oke-Ode in Ifelodun LGA at night. A prominent local businessman and two members of his family were abducted. On Monday, April 13, 2026 at approximately 8:30 p.m., near Lokoja, Kogi State, a Toyota Hiace bus belonging to Chisco Transport Company, travelling from Lagos to Abuja, was ambushed by armed men. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja was also under threat of attacks by bandits and insurgents between April 14 and 16. The uncovered plots were said to have targeted the airport, correctional custodian centres, and military facilities. The trauma of April was also compounded by official denial. On April 15, a Benue Links bus was ambushed on the

Makurdi–Otukpo Road. While families wept for eight UTME candidates missing in the bush, JAMB and the police initially dismissed the reports as misinformation. It took four days in captivity and a coordinated rescue operation in the Amla Forest for the truth to emerge. When Governor Hyacinth Alia of Benue State received the 15 rescued victims on April 19, he confirmed that eight of the rescued victims were indeed UTME candidates. On Saturday April 18, a GUO driver was murdered on the Ore-Benin Road while his passengers were dragged into the bush. The incident occurred at about 6:00 p.m. on the Iguobazuwa axis, along the Lagos–Benin Express Road, near the Edo/Ondo boundary. One female passenger was rescued with gunshot injuries, while three other passengers were forcefully marched into the forest. On the same April 18, 2026 at about 6:30 p.m at Onigambari village, near the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN), along the Mamu-Ijebu Ode axis of Ibadan-Ijebu Ode Road, Dasola Sanusi, a female officer of the Man O' War, was killed. She was silenced in an attack by gunmen, who emerged from the forest and opened fire indiscriminately on vehicles conveying passengers returning from a social event in Ibadan. Two other officers sustained gunshot wounds and were rushed to hospitals in Ago-Iwoye and Ibadan. It was further gathered that between April 1 and 21, between 300 and 500 persons were killed, more than 200 abducted, while thousands were displaced. The figures were only for the reported cases.

Below-the-belt blow for Nigerian military. Even in April, soldiers were not safe. Military bases were raided, patrols were ambushed, and weapons were seized. The overnight hours of April 8 leading into April 9, 2026, marked one of the most coordinated and devastating insurgent strikes against the Nigerian military in recent history. It wasn't just a single raid; it was a multi-pronged assault that overran key tactical headquarters. The headquarters, 29 Task Force Brigade at Benisheikh in Borno was attacked, where Brigadier-General Oseni Omoh Braimah was killed. Hundreds of insurgents, linked to both Boko Haram and ISWAP, launched a swarm attack on the base. They used heavy machine guns and RPGs to breach the perimeter. Reports from the ground and military sources confirmed that the insurgents set fire to multiple buildings and destroyed several military vehicles, including armoured personnel carriers (APCs). In addition to the General, Captain Ismail and at least 18 other soldiers were confirmed dead in the location. The military base in Monguno, Borno, was also attacked while the nation was reeling from the Benisheikh news, with major reports emerging by April 13. The base commander, Col. I.A. Muhammed, along with four other soldiers, were killed in the separate but equally brazen assault. Similar to the Benisheikh raid, the insurgents used hit-and-fade tactics but with enough firepower to temporarily displace troops from their defensive positions. During the same period of heightened activity, military outposts along the Kirawa-Pulka axis, near the Cameroon border, were hit. Troops of the 153 Task Battalion had to fight a desperate battle to prevent their formation from being completely overrun. Within the past five months, two generals; Brig-Gen Uba in November 2025, and Brig-Gen Braimah in April 2026, as well as Col Muhammed have been killed by bandits and insurgents, which probably showed that military command and control are being targeted. One of the narratives that have been constant from survivors is that the attackers have been coming out from forests to strike, and would return to the forests after every attack. As gathered, forests have become hideouts for bandits, kidnap camps, arms routes, and training camps for insurgents and bandits. Security forces, according to media reports, have raided the

forests on many occasions. But they don't stay in the forest, which probably keep criminals in control of the ungoverned areas. The current trends of insecurity have, however, made Nigerians to ask questions about the establishment of forest guards mooted by the office of the National Security Adviser some time ago.

Investigation revealed that the proposal for a revitalized Forest Guard system, spearheaded by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) under Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, marks a shift in Nigeria's internal security strategy. It was officially launched as the Presidential Forest Guards Initiative (PFGI) in May 2025. The programme moved into full operational status in early 2026. The core objective is to reclaim Nigeria's ungoverned spaces, which are vast forest reserves that have historically served as sanctuaries for bandits, kidnapers, and insurgents. In late December 2025 and early 2026, the first batch of over 7,000 forest guards graduated and were deployed across seven frontline pilot states of Borno, Sokoto, Yobe, Adamawa, Niger, Kwara, and Kebbi. A critical component of the proposal is that guards are recruited from their own local government areas. This ensures they have intimate knowledge of the terrain and local community networks; which conventional military forces often lack. While it is being overseen by the NSA, the initiative is a collaborative effort. Instructors are drawn from the Nigerian Army, Navy, DSS, Police, and the National Park Service. Also, it is coordinated by the Department of State Services (DSS) and the National Park Service. The guards undergo a rigorous three-month programme, including endurance drills, long-range patrol simulations, ambush response, tactical field craft, and rescue operations. The primary goal is to make the forests uncomfortable for criminal elements by establishing a permanent, armed security presence where it was previously absent. They are also to function as first responders. The guards act as a human intelligence layer, providing real-time data to the military and police for more effective kinetic operations.

Beyond counter-insurgency, the mandate includes curbing illegal logging and the illicit exploitation of natural resources within the forest reserves. Despite the rollout, the initiative faces on-going debate. There have been calls for robust mechanisms to prevent the force from becoming a politicized militia or being compromised by local criminal networks. Also media reports stated that the NSA has expressed intent to expand the force nationwide, with some security analysts suggesting a target strength of up to 300,000 personnel to effectively cover Nigeria's extensive forest belts. As of April 2026, the Nigeria Hunters and Forest Security Service (NHFSS) Bill, which provides the permanent legal framework for the guards, has been passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives. However, it is still awaiting presidential assent. It was also gathered that without the bill being signed into an Act, the guards technically operate as a volunteer-based or interim force under the coordination of the ONSA and the Ministry of Environment, rather than a permanent, pensionable federal service like the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). Despite the bill not being fully signed into law, President Bola Tinubu recently approved the recruitment of an additional 1,000 forest guards for Plateau State, following security breaches in Jos North, and another 2,000 for Bauchi State. Investigation also showed that Kajuru or Shiroro forest axes are so vast that a few hundred guards could only monitor specific corridors, leaving other areas vulnerable.