**29 People Killed In Overnight Attacks By Terror Group Al-Shabab**

July 7, 2014

By Damien Gayle

Daily Mail

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2682239/29-people-killed-overnight-attacks-terror-group-al-Shabab-raided-village-taking-aim-residents-targeted-police-station.html#ixzz36i1T9FPy

Gunmen fired indiscriminately at homes, burned down a church and raided a police station in two attacks on Kenyan coastal towns overnight, killing at least 29 people.

Twenty of the victims were killed in an attack in the Gamba area of Tana River county, where gunmen rushed the police station and freed suspected al-Shabab militants.

Another nine were killed in a separate raid at the Hindi trading centre in neighbouring Lamu county, near the town of Mpeketoni where 65 people were killed last month.

The Somali Islamist militant group al-Shabab, which last September attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Mwenda Njoka, a spokesman for the interior ministry, told Reuters: 'There were two attacks in Lamu and Tana River last night. In Lamu we have nine people dead and in Tana River we have 20. The number could rise.'

Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab, al Shabaab's military operations spokesman, told Reuters in Mogadishu that the Somali group was behind both attacks on Saturday night.

It had also said it was responsible for the June raids in Lamu County, around Mpeketoni.

But President Uhuru Kenyatta dismissed al-Shabab's claim last month and blamed local politicians, stoking an already fierce row with the opposition, which denied any role.

Regardless of who is blamed this time, the violence will hammer an already beleaguered tourist industry that has been hit by a wave of militant attacks.

And they will deepen public frustrations about poor security in Kenya a day before a big opposition rally is planned for the capital.

At a news conference, police deputy inspector general Grace Kaindi said a blackboard, ripped out of a school, was found at a junction near Hindi with scrawling that could implicate the coastal separatist group, the Mombasa Republic Movement (MRC).

'At first we thought it was al Shabaab, but now it is turning out that it is MRC as they have put it there clearly,' she said, adding other scribbled phrases seemed to back opposition leader Raila Odinga.

Slogans included 'MRC - You are sleeping,' 'Muslims your land is being grabbed', 'Raila is adequate' and 'Uhuru down'.

The MRC swiftly denied any role. 'The government should stop using us as a scapegoat,' Randu Nzai Ruwa, the MRC Secretary General, told Reuters by telephone.

Officials said a group of 10-15 men struck at Hindi, situated nine miles from the town of Lamu, and close to the town of Mpeketoni, which was nearly destroyed in one of the attacks in June, at about 10 pm on Saturday.

'They went around shooting at people and villages indiscriminately,' Abdallah Shahasi, the area chief, told Reuters.

Al-Shabab announced that at the same time it had broken into the police station at Gamba and freed suspects from the detention cells. A Kenyan police source, who asked not to be named, corroborated that account.

He told Reuters: 'They killed some of our colleagues and freed Muslim detainees. Some of those freed were linked to the Mpeketoni attacks two weeks ago.

'We still don't know how many detainees were freed until we verify with registers at the station.'

A senior police source who also asked to remain anonymous told the Associated Press that the nine victims of the raid included five inmates said to be non-Muslim. He said three other inmates escaped with the gunmen.

The officer said the gunmen got to the police station by car-jacking a truck and killing its three occupants. Five police officers were wounded in the attack and one officer was killed, he said.

Miiri Njenga, the Lamu county commissioner, said the attackers targeted government offices and some properties, including a church, were burned down.

Lamu County police chief Ephantus Kariuki said victims were shot in the head with their hands bound.

'It seems the attacks are more associated with land disputes and resources,' he told Reuters, speaking of a region where rival ethnic groups have long rowed over land ownership.

The Kenyan Red Cross said three people were taken to hospital with injuries, from both areas, adding another one was reported missing in Gamba.

Militant attacks on the coast have fanned an already tense political atmosphere in Kenya, which has sent troops to join African troops battling al-Shabab in neighbouring Somalia.

Veteran opposition leader Odinga, defeated by Kenyatta in last year's election, has held rallies over the past month criticising the government over frequent militant attacks.

Kenyatta stepped into an already heated debate by accusing local politicians of being behind strikes on Mpeketoni. Opponents saw his statement as fingering Odinga, who has promised a major rally on Monday in Nairobi.

Religious leaders have urged Kenyans to avoid rallies that could deepen divisions in a nation scarred by political violence in the recent past. Political allegiances in Kenya tend to follow ethnic lines.

The nation is haunted by the 2007 presidential election, when 1,200 died in weeks of ethnic blood-letting - over which Kenyatta still faces trial at The Hague this year for crimes against humanity.

However, last year's vote went off calmly.