

BY KARIM MUYOBO

KAMPALA. Uganda has long been spared the kind of regular school attacks that plague other parts of the world. But recent years have shown that the country can also face such incidents.

In 2023, suspected rebels linked to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) stormed Lhubiriha SS, killing 42 people, including 37 students. Many victims were burnt or hacked to death, while others were reportedly shot, a tragedy that sent shockwaves across the nation.

Previous attacks on schools

Thursday's Gaba attack was cut from a different cloth. Unlike the rebel assault in Kasese, this appears to have been the work of a lone wolf rather than an organised group.

The Gaba tragedy, however, fits into a broader pattern of attacks across Africa, where both extremist groups and personal vendettas have turned classrooms into battlegrounds.

In Kenya, a recent attack in Turkana saw an expelled student allegedly return with armed accomplices, killing

six students and a guard near Kakuma Refugee Camp. Officials said the attacker was motivated by revenge.

Nigeria has faced the brunt of extremist violence. Boko Haram has repeatedly targeted schools through kidnappings and mass killings. The 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok remains etched in global memory. Even years later, sporadic attacks continue to cast a long shadow over classrooms in the northeast.

Analysts say the drivers of school at-

tacks across Africa are a mixed bag of terrorism, political instability, communal conflict, and personal grudges. Boarding schools, where children sleep on campus, often become sitting ducks, with attackers exploiting gaps in security.

While Africa grapples with sporadic but shocking attacks, the US faces a drumbeat of school shootings. Over the past two decades, dozens of incidents have left students and educators dead.

High-profile cases include the Robb Elementary School shooting, where 21 people - 19 of them children - were killed; the Sandy Hook massacre, which

claimed 26 lives; and the Columbine tragedy, where 13 students and teachers were slain.

According to CNN and the Gun Violence Archive, dozens of school shootings are reported each year in the US, with 2024 alone recording at least 83 incidents. Unlike Africa, where machetes and knives often feature, firearms are the weapon of choice in the US.

Experts warn that the ripple effects of such violence run deep: trauma for students and teachers, fear that hangs over communities like a dark cloud, and growing distrust in the institutions meant to nurture and protect children.



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