

... that two churches — the First ECWA Church and St. Augustine Catholic Church, both located in Ariko, were affected.

“I am currently on my way to the community to ascertain the exact number of casualties. Some sources said seven persons were killed, while others claimed eight. I will provide an update once details are confirmed,” Bawa said.

He noted that poor telecommunications coverage in the area may have contributed to the scale of the attack, delaying any immediate response.

“The attackers came in large numbers. They surrounded the area and began shooting sporadically at worshippers. Several people were killed, while many others were taken away into the bush,” he added.

As of the time of filing in this report, the state police command was yet to issue an official statement on the incident.

② Also in Benue, it was a bleak Easter celebration in Mbalom-Mbatsada-Agana communities, Gwer East Local Government Area, as suspected herders killed nine people.

Locals who spoke to newsmen through telephone on Sunday, claimed that the attack occurred at about 6:00pm on Saturday.

The locals said the attackers invaded the market square and unleashed terror on innocent people.

Several people were said to have been injured during the attack, just as residents have fled the affected communities.

Chairman of Gwer West LGA, Timothy Adi, who con-

... the attack, said two corpses were recovered on Saturday night and seven others on Sunday.

He added: “The attack happened yesterday [Saturday] between 5p.m and 6p.m. Nine corpses were recovered — two yesterday and seven today [Sunday].

Adi, who said the state Commissioner of Police, Eanyi Emenari, had visited the affected communities and appealed to Federal Government to help curtail the activities of herders in the state.

Efforts to get the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Udeme Ede were not successful.

Meanwhile, Governor Hyacinth Alia of Benue State has condemned the attack.

This was contained in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Kula Tersoo, on Sunday, in Makurdi.

Alia described the attack as a “barbaric act and a dire affront to the collective peace and security of the state.”

The governor expressed sympathy to families affected by the attack, just as he assured them that the government would stand firmly with them in this difficult time.

“Governor Alia notes with grave concern the pattern of what appears to be calculated and selective attacks in parts of the state, stressing that such acts of terror, though increasingly hydra-headed in nature, will not be allowed to thrive.

“He reiterates his resolve to confront and subdue all forms of criminality threatening the safety of Benue communities,” the statement read partly.