

Suspected Armed Herders Kill 16 Residents In Benue

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No fewer than 16 people have reportedly been killed following an attack by suspected armed herders in Nobi community, Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Sunday Telegraph gathered that the attackers stormed the community in the early hours of Sunday, opening fire on villagers and forcing many to flee for safety.

The incident sparked protests in Otukpo, where youths and women blocked major roads leading into the town, including the Enugu–Otukpo and Makurdi–Otukpo highways, as well as access routes to the palace of the Och’Idoma.

A resident privy to the development, Comfort Inalegwu, said the attackers struck between 3:30 a.m. and 4:30 a.m., leaving several people dead and many others injured.

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"Some Fulani herdsmen, between 3:30 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. today, attacked Nobi community in Otukpo, shooting sporadically, which made residents flee.

"At least 16 people were killed this morning during the attack. I lost my sister and two of her children in the attack.

"The Fulani entered her house and shot them. Their corpses are now at the morgue of Otukpo General Hospital," she said.

Inalegwu added that several residents remained unaccounted for and warned that women in the area would sustain their protests until decisive action was taken to halt the recurring attacks on communities in Idoma land.

She also threatened that elections would not be allowed to hold in the area unless the government addressed the worsening insecurity.

Efforts to obtain comments from the Chairman of Otukpo Local Government Area, Maxwell Ogiri, were unsuccessful as he could not be reached at the time of filing this report.

Reacting to the incident, Benue State Governor Hyacinth Alia condemned the attack, describing it as a brutal assault on innocent lives and the peace of the state.

In a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Tersoo Kula, the governor said the attackers reportedly invaded Akpachi Village in Akpa, Otukpo Local Government Area, between 3:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. while residents were asleep.

According to the statement, several people were killed while others sustained varying degrees of injuries.

"These acts of mindless bloodshed are a direct attempt to sabotage the progress of our state," the governor said.

Expressing sympathy with the affected families, Alia said: "Your lives are precious, and I can assure you that your ancestral lands will not be surrendered to fear."

He noted that the people of Benue had consistently demonstrated restraint despite repeated attacks, warning that their commitment to peace should not be mistaken for weakness.

"My government stands firmly with you, and we will not allow our communities to be turned into killing fields," he added.

The governor directed security agencies in the state to work closely with their counterparts in neighbouring states by intensifying surveillance and patrols in affected communities and border areas.

He also instructed security operatives to track down and prosecute those responsible for the attack while deploying additional personnel and resources to protect vulnerable communities from further assaults.

Alia urged residents to remain vigilant and continue providing security agencies with credible and timely intelligence, stressing that public cooperation remains vital to efforts aimed at improving security across the state.

The spokesperson for the Benue State Police Command, DSP Udeme Edet, could not be reached for comment as of the time this report was filed.