



The protesting women and youths at Ugbokpo, headquarters of Apa Local Government Area of Benue State.

Benue killings: Angry women, youths block highway, demand govt ends attacks

By Peter Duru

..2 killed, some injured as armed herdsmen clash with vigilantes
..cult clash claims youth leader, one other, sparks security crackdown

MAKURDI—THOUSANDS of women and youths, yesterday, took to the streets of Ugbokpo, headquarters of Apa Local Government Area of Benue State, to protest the rising wave of killings allegedly carried out by suspected armed herdsmen in Apa and neighbouring Agatu Local Government Area of the state.

This came as tension escalated in Agatu council, following the killing of two youths during a gun battle with suspected armed herdsmen at Atakpa community.

Meanwhile, a deadly cult supremacy battle has claimed the life of a youth leader and another resident in Naka, headquarters of Gwer West Local Government Area of the state, throwing the community into fear.

The Apa protest followed fresh attacks on Edikwu-Ankpali, Ikobi and Adija communities in Apa, as well as Atakpa in Agatu, which reportedly left no fewer than 16 persons dead between last Friday and Tuesday.

Demonstrators marched through major streets of Ugbokpo before blocking the busy Otukpo-Oweto-Abuja Federal Highway, causing long hours of gridlock and leaving commuters stranded.

Carrying placards with inscriptions such as "Statements are not enough, we need action now," "The Governor must visit Apa-Agatu," and "Lives are being lost, secure Apa-Agatu now," the protesters demanded immediate and decisive intervention from the government to halt the ongoing violence.

One of the protest leaders, Ochofie Odebugu, lamented what he described as the continued silence of both state and federal authorities despite repeated attacks on communities in the area. He urged Governor Hyacinth Alia to visit Apa and Agatu to assess the situation firsthand and engage directly with affected residents. Odebugu called

for increased security deployment, including the establishment of security outposts in vulnerable communities and improved collaboration between local vigilante groups and formal security agencies to ensure rapid response to threats.

Another protest leader, Igbe Bawa, decried the displacement of residents, noting that many people had been forced to flee their homes due to persistent attacks.

He stressed that the protests would continue until tangible results are seen, including the safe return of displaced persons, restoration of normal economic activities, and rebuilding of affected communities.

The protesters further urged the government to provide regular updates on steps being taken to address the crisis, insisting that transparency and visible action are key to restoring public confidence.

2 killed, some injured as armed herdsmen clash with Benue vigilantes

In Agatu, local sources said the incident, which occurred on Monday afternoon, also left some youths injured, while others are still unaccounted for.

According to a community source, the clash erupted when a group of Agatu youths mobilised to the border between Agatu and Apa Local Government Areas of the state to prevent suspected herdsmen from crossing into their communities. The move followed

The gangs moved around attacking their targets and killing them on the spot. They used dangerous weapons, beating and hacking the victims to death in broad daylight

renewed attacks over the weekend in parts of Apa council. The source explained, "There was widespread outrage on Monday over the weekend attacks on Adija, Ikobi, and Edikwu-Ankpali communities in Apa council. The attacks claimed several lives, with many others injured or missing."

"Fearing that the attackers might extend their assault into Agatu due to the shared boundary, and considering that Agatu serves as a link between Benue and Nasarawa states, some youths mobilised to the border armed with dane guns to stop the herdsmen from advancing and also try to rescue missing persons."

"Unfortunately, the herdsmen, who were armed with automatic rifles, engaged the youths at the border. The ensuing gunfight led to the death of two of the youths, while several others sustained injuries."

"They had been advised against undertaking the mission, but they insisted on defending their communities and searching for missing persons from Sunday's attack. Sadly, they were overpowered by the superior firepower of the herdsmen, who carried AK-47 rifles," the source said.

The source further disclosed that the violence has forced residents living along the affected route to flee their homes for fear of further attacks.

When contacted, the Chairman of Agatu council, Mr. Melvin Ejeh, said he had yet to receive full details of what transpired.

Cult clash claims youth leader, one other, sparks security crackdown

The youth leader identified as Mr. Peter Iokohol, popularly known as 'P-rush', and his associate, were reportedly killed during a violent clash between rival cult groups that had been brewing in the area for some time.

An eyewitness revealed that armed gangs, believed

to belong to opposing "red" and "black" cult factions, moved from house to house in a coordinated attack, targeting perceived rivals. "The gangs moved around attacking their targets and killing them on the spot. They used dangerous weapons, beating and hacking the victims to death in broad daylight," he disclosed.

The situation took an even more disturbing turn with reports that some of the attackers were teenagers. Worried by the development, the Chairman of Gwer West council, Mr. Victor Ormin visited the homes and scenes of the attack.

According to the Special Assistant to the Chairman on Media, Publicity, and Strategic Communications, Timothy Ajije, the Chairman, accompanied by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Naka, Charles Gazama undertook the visit to assess the situation firsthand, engage grieving families, and reinforce urgent security interventions aimed at halting the disturbing trend.

At the residence of the slain youth leader, a landlord, Mr. Zungwenen Zape, recounted how over 20 youths, said to be between the ages of 13 and 15, stormed the compound in the early hours of Monday. "They came issuing death threats and attacking with stones and pestles. Residents were left helpless and terrified," he said.

In a separate account, Mr. James Tarbo, father of another victim, Moses Tarbo, narrated how his son was attacked and later died in a private hospital despite efforts to save him.

Reacting to the killings, Chairman of Gwer West council, Mr. Victor Ormin, described the incident as "senseless, barbaric, and a tragic loss to the entire Gwer West. We will not tolerate this anymore, enough is enough," vowing that his administration would dismantle criminal networks operating in the area.

Efforts to reach the Police Public Relations Officer, Udeme Edet were unsuccessful.