

FARMERS/HERDSMEN CONFLICT HEAVY FIGHTING ERUPTS IN BENUE

Category: [New s](#) Published on Sunday, 10 November 2013 05:01 Written by Hope Abah, Makurdi Hits: 106



Agatu mayhem

. 35 Feared Killed
. 7 Villages Sacked

At least, 35 people are feared dead in seven Agatu villages, which were sacked yesterday by gunmen in a fresh attack that took the people by surprise. Some of the people from the sacked villages who spoke to our reporter yesterday at about 5.00pm put the death toll at 35, and blamed suspected cattle rearers for the killings.



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The Agatu people in Benue State have come under severe attacks in recent times, just as the heavy fighting going on in the area, as at the time of sending this report, would be the third in one week alone.

At least, an estimated 200 deaths have been recorded in fightings between farmers and herders in Benue State this year alone.

Benue State's Commissioner for Works, Mr John Ngbede, who hails from Agatu area, confirmed the latest attack, which came barely 24 hours after he addressed newsmen in Makurdi on the disturbing trend.

Mr Ngbede had appealed to security agencies last Friday to take charge, as reports reaching him revealed that unknown gunmen were advancing to invade more communities in his locality.

He told Sunday Trust yesterday that heavy fighting was going on in Agatu, just as houses were being set on fire and many were feared dead.

"It is true that Agatu is boiling at the moment. Many people are feared dead. I can't confirm the exact number right now," Ngbede said.

Also, member representing Agatu state constituency in the Benue State House of Assembly, Hon Sule Audu, told our reporter that seven villages had been sacked, with many feared dead.

He mentioned the villages to include Eilo, Okpagabi, Ogwule-Ankpa, Ogbangede, Ekwo, Enogaje and Okpanchenyi.

The lawmaker lamented that there were not enough security men on ground to counter the situation as the gunmen were having a field day and making further progress to neighbouring villages.

"As I speak to you, only few soldiers are on ground. They don't even have mobility to match the strength of the invaders. The attackers are numerous, so many that we can't count them. They are spread across all the communities and unleashing terror on my people without any security resistance.

"They are moving towards Oshugbudu now and I ask, what can less than 40 soldiers on ground do to stop armed invaders who may be in hundreds," Audu queried?

However, the state Secretary of the Myetti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Garus Gololo, has denied that the invaders were Fulani herders.

Gololo said that since a reconciliation committee was set up by the Ochi' Idoma to broker peace between the herders and Agatu natives, there had never been a reason for them to fight again.

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He said also: "I don't know which people are attacking the Agatu in recent times. We don't have any Fulani person currently residing in the area, and as I had said earlier, we need peace, so it couldn't have been my people," he maintained.

Contacted, the Benue State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr Daniel Ezeala, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), confirmed the heavy fighting.

"Five Agatu villages are currently under heavy attacks. We can't confirm the exact number of causality now. However, we are on top of the situation," Ezeala noted.

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