

Many Killed In Benue Farmers-Herders Clashes

Many people have been killed in several communities of Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State after suspected herders launched attacks on the areas. Witnesses...



farmers-herders crises

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Many people have been killed in several communities of Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State after suspected herders launched attacks on the areas.

Witnesses said many people were still missing some with gun shot wounds on several inhabitants and burnt houses.

A local said the attacks began barely a week ago and escalated during the weekend to other parts of Kwande LGA, including Moon, Mbaikyor, Mbadura and Ilyav council wards.

But the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) said there was a recent confrontation between herders and local guards in the affected areas over confiscation of livestock.

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The association said herders were killed in the process, but that peace was currently being brokered by military authorities and other security agencies in the state.

When contacted, the new Public Relations Officer of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), Flight Lieutenant DO Oquah, said the matter was being resolved.

Oquah could not however confirm the number of people killed saying s, “I cannot really tell because I’m not there. I don’t know the number of those killed.

“Today, the Force Commander of OPWS, Major General Kevin Aligbe, invited the village heads, youth leaders and the representatives of the Miyetti Allah. He held a meeting with them to see how they could resolve the issues, so they came around today (Monday). Not that we are not aware; we are aware,” he said.

The attackers, according to the witnesses, first launched an offensive from River Moon before extending to adjoining rural communities, a development which has forced the villagers to desert their homes.

A former council chairman of Kwande LGA, Tertsua Yarkwan, told our correspondent on phone that, “What is happening there is not too clear now but all that we have been hearing is herders’ attack especially on the Turan district to the extent that those areas which had never witnessed an attack are now under siege.

“On a daily basis now, you hear four persons killed in one place and five in another. Just as they are recovering corpses, there are also missing ones that cannot be accounted for.”

Villagers further narrated that some communities such as Jato-Aka, the ancestral headquarters of the Tiv nation, Ugbe, Iyon, Ityuluv, Injov Tyopaver, Kendev, Maav were all at the weekend attacked.

Similarly, an ex-chairman of Kwande, Bem Tseen, told journalists in Makurdi that he lost three family members to the attack which in his estimation started a few days before the February 25 presidential election.

He said, “It had been on and off; it however became severe a few days ago. We were at home when the suspected armed herders started attacking our communities from different fronts. We have boundaries with the Republic of Cameroon, Taraba State and Katsina-Ala LGA.

“We were all scared that they might attack Jato Aka which is the centre of the Turan area. If you go to Jato Aka, people are just scattered everywhere. From Abande to Anwase side down to Kashimbila, Anyase extending to Mbahan, in fact, about four to five council wards have been affected. You hear gunshots from several fronts and we are totally confused. As I speak to you, three of my family members have been killed.

“Mbaikyor, Mbadura, Moon and Ilyav council wards, and Swem Hills have been ransacked.”

Meanwhile, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for Benue Command, SP Catherine Anene, said she was yet to get details of the incidents from the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) who just resumed duties in the area.

Anene added that the new DPO in charge of Kwande LGA as at Monday afternoon said that calm had been restored to the vicinity.

Meanwhile, the State Secretary of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, Ibrahim Galma, said there was a recent confrontation between herders and local guards in the affected areas from what the association gathered over confiscation of their livestock.

He said some herders were also killed in the process, adding that peace was however being brokered by military authorities and other security agencies in the state over troubled Kwande, Apa, Guma, Gwer West and other places.

Galma added that MACBAN and other stakeholders which included All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) were in attendance at the peace meeting convened by the OPWS Force Commander to resolve the matter.