

# Death toll in Benue community attack rises to 74

From Hope Abah,  
Makurdi

**The death toll from the recent attack on the Ayati community in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State has reportedly risen to 74.**

The attack, carried out by bandits in alleged collusion with external armed invaders, occurred on August 8, 2024.

Initial reports indicated that over 30 people were killed on the spot.

As search parties combed the area for missing persons, the death toll climbed to 59.

It was gathered that 15 more victims succumbed to their injuries in the days following the attack, bringing the total number of casualties to 74.

A list compiled by the community and made available to our correspondent in Makurdi on Sunday said "59 bodies were recovered shortly after the attack, with 15 additional victims dying in the hospital between August 8 and August 12 due to gunshot wounds sustained during the invasion."

Our correspondent also learnt that the community has faced violence over the past year, with 40 other people killed between July 2023 and July 2024.

Among these, 11 people were murdered in a separate attack on July 3, 2024, which sparked

widespread protests and the destruction of public and private properties in the area.

Residents recounted the horror of the August 8 massacre, which occurred on a Thursday night when bandits, in large numbers, launched an assault on Ayati, the headquarters of Borikyo ward.

They said by Friday morning, more than 50 people had been confirmed dead, with efforts continuing to recover bodies from the surrounding bush.

"Sadly, even as of yesterday morning (Saturday, August 17), a decomposed body was found in the bush. It was one of the victims missing from the August 8 attack," a resident, who requested anonymity, told our correspondent.

Chief Ayati Shima, a politician from the community, condemned the incident in a phone interview, expressing deep sorrow over the loss of lives and frustration with the political class's inability to address the ongoing insecurity in the area.

Shima, a former gubernatorial candidate in the state, noted that the list of victims compiled by the community is likely only a fraction of the true extent of the security challenges his people face.

He lamented the government's lack of proactive measures to

prevent such large-scale attacks, particularly given the ongoing, unreported violence occurring on farms and in markets.

"Most of those killed were displaced villagers from neighbouring troubled areas who had sought refuge in Ayati, the headquarters of Borikyo ward," Shima said.

"Now, Ayati has become deserted, which is a grave concern. Benue is known as the 'food basket of the nation' due to the agricultural output from our area. But now, farmers can no longer go to their fields, and the local economy is being crippled by insecurity," he added.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for the Benue Command, SP Catherine Anene, had previously confirmed the incident, reporting the deaths of two policemen and 15 villagers.

However, she did not respond to follow-up inquiries regarding the updated death toll.

It would be recalled that Ukum, along with Logo and Kastina-Ala in the Sankera ancestral bloc, has been plagued by armed outlaws for many years, despite multiple joint security operations in the area.

