

15 Traders Killed In Fresh Attack On Benue Communities



By Hope Abah, Makurdi

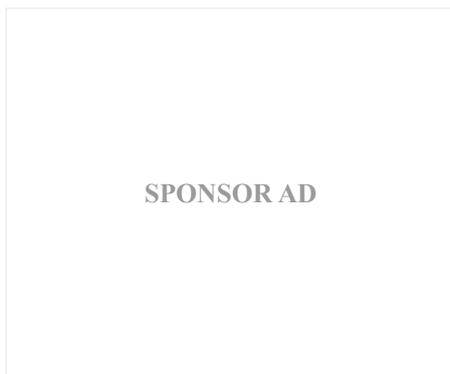
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At least 15 traders have reportedly been killed by armed invaders in communities around Ogwumogbo and Okpo'okpolo in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

Our correspondent gathered that the traders were returning from Oweto market in Agatu to their various villages when they were attacked by the gunmen who laid siege to the affected vicinities.

A former Vice Chairman of Agatu LGA, John Ikwulono, said the incident occurred on Saturday evening.



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Ikwulono said many people also sustained injuries.

He added that five of the victims were killed between Ogbayi and Ogwumogbo, where there's a small stream called Abekoko, identifying one Ali from Ogwumogbo and four others whose names were not known among the dead.

Chairman of Agatu LGA, Melvin James, was said to be attending the burial of the victims on Sunday when a call was put through his telephone and answered by his aide.

The aide who declined to mention his name confirmed the killings in the area, alleging that the act was perpetrated by armed herders.

Contacted, the State Chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Mohammed Risku, said he was attending a meeting, promising to get back but had not done at the time of filing this report.

But, MACBAN Secretary, Ibrahim Galma, told our correspondent that he hadn't heard about any trouble in the area but would confirm whether there were such occurrences before commenting on the matter.

However, he has not reverted at the time of filing ng this report.

"I'm not aware of any challenges in the area," Galma said.

Police spokesperson for Benue command, CSP Catherine Anene, said she was yet to receive any reports of such incident.

Meanwhile, the latest deaths bring the number of people killed between April 1 and May 17, this year to 174.

Locals argued that the figures could be higher because of unreported incidents in remote areas.

Multiple LGAs have recently experienced violence during this period, including Gwer East, Guma, the Sankera axis (Katsina-Ala, Logo, Ukum), Otukpo, Gwer West, Kwande, Apa, Agatu and Makurdi.

However, Sankera remains the worst-hit, with 83 deaths recorded from April 17 to 21.