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Tuesday, May 24, 2011

30 feared killed as herdsmen raid Benue communities

From Simeon Nwakaudu (Makurdi) and Abosede Musari (Abuja)

Tsiga seeks better security

*Blanchir
les
légumes
c'est ça :*

AGAIN, insecurity in Benue State worsened yesterday as a band of armed herdsmen invaded villages around Udei and Yelwatta communities in Isherev areas of Guma Local Council, leaving about 30 persons dead, with more than 10,000 persons displaced.

Meanwhile, the Director-General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Brig.-Gen. Muharazu Tsiga, has attributed the death of the 10 corps members in the recent post-elections violence in Bauchi State to national insecurity rather than a problem with the scheme.

Tsiga, who spoke in an interview with journalists in Abuja yesterday, explained that the major problem was with national security, which should be urgently addressed rather than call for the scrapping of the scheme or for regional posting of corps members.

Also in Makurdi, the police averted a riot when members of the opposition party almost lynched a young man suspected to be a thug.

He was accused of being one of the suspects who killed an ACN supporter, Ezekiel Yusuf, at the



*30 feared killed as herdsmen raid
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Angwan-Jukun area on Sunday evening.

An eye-witness, Terna Igbasue, who is taking refuge in Makurdi, told The Guardian that the herdsmen moved into the village at about 8.00 a.m. when most people had gone to farm.

He said that when they invaded villages in the area, they started setting homesteads ablaze and killing those who were at home, especially the aged and children.

According to him, other villagers on their farms were alerted that there had been an invasion of the villages around the area. He stated that at that point, the armed herdsmen were already shooting and marching towards the farms.

He said: "Many people escaped from the farms and headed for the federal road to avoid being killed by the herdsmen. Some persons who were not fast enough were killed on their farms."

Igbasue claimed that the herdsmen had sent earlier message to the communities in the area that they would invade them on a revenge mission over a misunderstanding that arose between farmers and the herdsmen.



When *The Guardian* drove along the Makurdi-Lafia, hundreds of displaced persons were trekking towards Daudu town, a major Tiv settlement on the route. Other displaced persons boarded pick-up vans and headed to Makurdi.

Also, when The Guardian called the State Police Commissioner, Ibrahim Mohammed, an aide who picked the phone said that he was in a security meeting.

On Monday morning at about 11.00 a.m., opposition youths accosted one young man suspected to have participated in the Sunday's killing of Yusuf. He was about being lynched when police patrol teams alerted by neighbours arrived the scene and arrested some suspects.

Despite the arrests, some youths held a peaceful demonstration in the area, denouncing Yusuf's killing.

Tsiga added: "Does it mean that if NYSC scheme is scrapped or if there is regional posting, that will be the end to insecurity, unemployment and distrust? The solution is to address the security challenge in this country. When I assumed office, I visited the 774 local councils in the country so that the traditional rulers and the police officers can form security committees to secure the corps members but we heard the news of the traditional ruler that raped a female corps member whom he should be protecting. Posting is not the issue, the issue is to address national security and get the people that should be protecting corps members to perform this obligation towards them."

He continued: "I'm appealing to Nigerians, particularly parents, to encourage the young ones to do their best. The youths are not the problem of Nigeria but we the elders, please encourage us", he said, adding that already, some of the corps members have started sending him text messages asking when they can go back to their places of primary assignment.

While he condoled with the families of the slain corps members, Tsiga said that the NYSC would pay insurance to the families of the slain corps members and was already working with INEC to compile the names of corps members who were affected or wounded or who lost their properties during the incident in order to compensate them. According to him, President Goodluck Jonathan views the incidence as a national calamity, which was the reason state burials were accorded the slain heroes and a token sum presented to their families.

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