

# 30 feared killed in herdsmen's raid of Benue communities

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## Police confirm death of 16 persons

TO the surviving residents of 13 communities in Benue State, last Sunday has become a day that has gone down on the hurtful side of the history of their areas.



On that day, the bestiality and moral freefall among some Nigerians played up as armed herdsmen struck in the communities, which have been deserted.

When normalcy finally returned to the affected villages, the bodies of 30 persons were allegedly found in the areas. The raid was linked to suspected armed Fulani militia, who attacked the Tiv communities in Guma and Gwer-West local councils.

The state police command, which confirmed the invasion, said the bandits killed 16 of the villagers.

Several of the villages and farm settlements were also burnt by the herdsmen in the two councils.

The hostility, according to Tiv leaders, occurred in the early hours of Sunday when the unsuspecting farmers on the borderline of River Benue were attacked by the well-armed herdsmen.

Some of the affected villages are Tse-Yange, Chile, Nanikpe, Tse-Gbuku and Tse-Kpar.

President of Tyoshin Youth Association (TYA), Joseph Mon, who narrated the incident to journalists in Makurdi yesterday, said the level of damage was yet to be ascertained but put the casualty figure at over 30.

Mon said the grief-stricken residents had fled the areas to neighbouring towns and villages while others were hiding in the bush.

"Everyone who is displaced is now on his or her own. There is no camp for anyone. They are scattered all over the place as some are still hiding in bushes while others have relocated to nearby towns and villages where they have relations," he said.

The Tiv leader identified the cause of the constant invasion of the settlements by Fulani herdsmen to moves to forcibly convert them to grazing zones.

"I feel that there is a hidden agenda to make the area a grazing area for the Fulani not minding who owns the land. The Fulani herdsmen are always armed and we are always on the defensive."

He, therefore, urged the federal and state governments to come to their rescue, stressing that the safety of his kinsmen must be guaranteed by the authorities.

Mon further urged security agencies to wade into the matter and restore peace to the troubled areas without further delay. He also asked for permanent security posts in the flash-points to forestall future invasion.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer in Benue, Araribe Ejike, said 16 persons died in the attacks.

He said the situation had been brought under control by officers and men of the police command.

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