

# Scores feared killed as farmers, grazers clash in Taraba State

From Charles Akpeji, Jalingo

**M**ANY people were yesterday said to have, again, been killed in Wukari Local Government of Taraba State following the clash between farmers and grazers in the area.

Before the eruption of the violence that led to another massive destruction of lives yesterday, about 13 persons were reported to have been killed in the area last Friday.

Some residents of the area, who said the state government seemed to have run out of ideas on how to restore permanent peace in the council as killings have continued unabated, urged the Federal Government to immediately deploy adequate security personnel to the local government.

Speaking to *The Guardian*, the President of the National

Association of WAPAN Students, Tsokwa Addati Ajiduku, identified the lukewarm attitude of both the state government and security operatives as responsible for the ongoing killings in the area.

On the number of casualties, he said "it is not possible for me to give you the accurate figure now but the truth is that a lot of people were killed and several others injured."

Wondering why it has become impossible for the state government to put an end to the insurgents' activities in the council, Ajiduku said "I am blaming the state government for the crises in Wukari."

Ajiduku alleged that rather than extend hands of friendship to the entire warring factions, the state government only reached out to the herdsmen, a situation which,

according to him, has continued to encourage the attackers to invade the community.

He lamented the alleged seeming non-concern of the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Josiah Sabo Kente, whom he observed did not seem to be worried by the activities of the attackers in his constituency. "Most of the attacks taking place in Wukari occurred in the Speaker's constituency, yet he seems not to be disturbed as if government has decided to give up on the crisis that has continued to erupt in the area,

"We are still blaming the speaker too because he never attempted to come home and see things for himself." Ajiduku said rather than wading into the crisis that is eliminating his people, the Speaker was "busy passing vote of confidence on the acting governor."

When reached for comment on yesterday killings, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Joseph Kwaji, said the attack was carried out by "unknown gunmen."

As for the numbers of casualties, the police, according to him, have no exact figures of the number of persons killed. He said the police command was aware that one person was killed in the attack.

The command, he claimed, has succeeded in restoring normalcy in the area. "Our men have succeeded in restoring peace to Wukari."

When asked to comment on the allegations leveled against the Speaker, his Special Adviser on Media Matters, Tanko Kaura, alleged smearing of the name of his boss by those he described as "ssspersons from the opposition parties."