

Nigeria: Herdsmen Kill 27 People in Taraba, Nine in Benue

By Charles Akpeji

DREAMS of ensuring peaceful elections in some parts of Taraba state may turn out to be a mirage following Friday attacks by herdsmen which led to the killing of fewer than twenty-seven people in Nwonko village of Wukari local government council and nine people in Logo local government.

The Guardian revealed villages attacked to include Chembe, Tse-Mue, Ife, Mgbakpa and Oragbai all in Ukemberagya council ward, which is four kilometers away Anyiin, headquarters of the local government.

The Taraba attacks, which began at the early hours of the day, was said to have led to massive destructions of farmlands, properties worth millions of Naira and left several persons with various degrees of injuries.

Speaking on the magnitude of the crisis, the member representing Wukari to constituency at the state House of Assembly, Daniel Ishaya Gani, said most of the casualties are women and children.

The attackers whom according to Gani stormed the village in their thousands, started their "destroying properties from Tunari village before storming Nwonko."

He said: "At the beginning, we thought the attackers were Boko Haram from Maiduguri because of their large numbers. It was later on that we discovered that they Fulani herdsmen."

He blamed the lukewarm attitudes of the security operatives especially the military men in charge of the areas to the incessant attacks, which according to him "left a lot of people dead and several others injured."

The military commander in charge of the area, as stated by him "seems to be taking side because he is always very reluctant in drafting his men to crisis area even our people run to him."

The refusal of the state government to fulfill its part of the earlier agreement by paying compensation to the herdsmen over their missing cows, he identified as one of the major reasons for the continued attacks.

According to him, the state government during the former Acting Governor, Alhaji Garba Umar, promised to compensate these people (herdsmen) but since he left office, the present government has refused to honour the agreement. So I believed that is a major reason for the attacks."

Regarding Benue attack, it was gathered that the gunmen had stormed the area at about 5: am and started shooting sporadically into the air for several hours, leaving scores of people with wounds and many others displaced.

Narrating the ordeal to The Guardian, the Senior Special Assistant to Governor Gabriel Suswam on Media and Public Affairs, Chief Joseph Anawah, an indigene of the area said the insurgents numbering about 100, invaded the area through different routes.

The governor's aide stated that the herdsmen pursued some farmers to their farms at day break and killed them, stating that most of those killed included people who were rendered homeless as a result of last year's attacks on the communities by the herdsmen and had returned to their villages to cultivate their farmlands.

He called for apt intervention of the federal government and other well-meaning individuals and organizations to end the crisis in order to save the state/nation from imminent famine.

While calling for the immediate transfer of the military commandant in charge of the area, the need for the state government to fulfill its parts of the agreement, he believed can no longer be overemphasized.

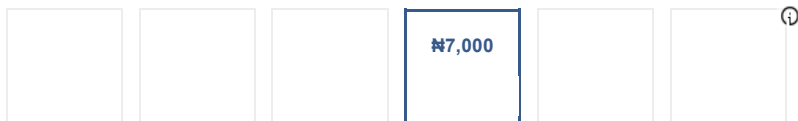
Though believing the attacks would not in any form affect the February polls, but the need for the government to rise up to its responsibilities by halting the herdsmen from having field days, he said have become vital.

Also confirming the attack to The Guardian, the President of the Wukari Youths of Vision, Awudu Kefas, said should the government continue to demonstrate lukewarm attitudes towards the attacks, they may be compelled to defend themselves.

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