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In Edo, Creation Of Grazing Routes Way Out Of Herdsmen Menace

By Alemma-Ozoruvu Aliu, Benin City on January 30, 2016 4:08 am

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THE menace of Fulani herdsmen clashing with farmers and communities has been on in several parts of Nigeria for sometime now. In Edo State, it has degenerated to the level of the herdsmen being accused of robberies, killings and kidnappings particularly in Akoko-Edo, Etsako and Owan axis of Edo North Senatorial District. The development has resulted in clashes between these herdsmen and members of affected communities.

The most recent of such clashes happened near Auchin in Etsako West local government area where two persons believed to be Fulani herdsmen were killed while a member of the vigilante group in the area sustained

bullet injuries.

The vigilante group were said to have hid in the bush near the route of the herdsmen when in the dead of the night, they (herdsmen) allegedly came out to mount roadblocks apparently to rob their victims. One of the vigilante group's members was said to have been stung by an insect and his shout caught the attention of the herdsmen who opened fire on them. Members of the vigilante group promptly returned fire, which led to loss of lives. Before then, a woman was allegedly killed in her farm for confronting herdsmen whose cows allegedly damaged her crops.

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The police in Igarra, headquarters of Akoko-Edo local government area, had in October last year reportedly killed a suspected kidnapper believed to be a Fulani herdsman who was said to have lured a butcher into the forest in the guise of engaging him to sell ram for Sallah. The Guardian gathered that the dead suspect, who was in company of three others, had approached the 58-year-old butcher in Igarra, requesting him to buy some cows and rams for the Sallah at reduced prices. The victim was said to have agreed for an amount and eventually followed his abductors to inspect the animals where heavily armed men reportedly seized him. It was gathered that the victim was relocated to another forest.

The suspected hoodlums were said to have opened negotiation with N5 million. The suspect was reportedly shot dead during a gun duel with the police who had pretended to have brought the ransom.

Before then, some yet to be identified gunmen also believed to be herdsmen shot and killed a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Akoko-Edo local council area, Captain Samson Amineshi (rtd). He was shot along the Igarra-Okpe road. He was said to have attended a social function in Igarra and was driving back home to Okpe in his car with two other occupants when they were reportedly flagged down by the gunmen. He was said to have dodged them and sped off not knowing that another gang laid ambush metres away, who appeared and fired directly at him and he died on the spot. Reports said that an undisclosed amount of money was collected from the occupants.

There have also been multiple robberies near the Ireukpen axis of the Auch-Benin Road by suspected Fulani herdsmen until persistent patrols by the police in that area introduced by former Commissioner of Police in the state, Folusho Adebajo, which has been sustained by his predecessors.

However, as a way out of the menace, former Commissioner for Agriculture in Edo state, Abdul Oroh suggested that government should create grazing routes across the states.

He added: "But I also believe that the way it is now, they are not just ordinary herdsmen; they are heavily armed with modern weapons so it is the duty of the Federal Government to find out who is arming them and for what purpose.

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