

Herdsman attack Ebonyi communities, kill 20, destroy property, others

From Nnamdi Akpa, Abakaliki

HERDSMEN have reportedly killed no fewer than 20 persons and destroyed property worth millions of Naira in Egedegede, Obegu and Amuzu communities in Ishielu Council Area of Ebonyi State.

A resident of the community confirmed to *The Guardian* that the herdsmen murdered over 20 persons, while another resident said 10 were killed.

But confirming the incident, Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, DSP Loveth Odah, said the command was yet to ascertain the number of casualties.

She noted that the Commissioner of Police (CP) had deployed a team led by Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in charge of Operations for an assess-

ment to get the detail of the report, but they were yet to come back.

"We are still waiting for our men to come back to tell us their findings. I am already preparing a press release on the incident but their report too will assist us in giving you detailed information about it," Odah said.

One of the victims said the community was in a state of mourning following the attack, noting that the herdsmen attacked the community at midnight, which, he said, caused serious panic.

He said the herdsmen also killed a Methodist Church priest in Nkalaha, a neighbouring community, whose car was burnt, adding that houses, food items, furniture and other things, were set ablaze.

Commissioner for Business Development, Dr. Stephen

Odo and Chairman of Ishielu Council Area, Sunday Eze, who led security agents to the communities yesterday, commiserated with families of the victims and assured that government would take proactive measures to investigate the incident.

An eyewitness, Ngozi Odoabuchi, described the incident as 'horrible' just as *The Guardian* learnt that corpses of the deceased were conveyed to Eha-Amafu, Enugu State for embalmment.

Three residents of Umuhali, two residents of Amazu, and three residents of Eha-Amufu, who were passing the Nkalagu-Obeagu, Eha-Amufu-Ikem and Ubolafor road and two others, from Anambra State but resident at Nigercem Nkalagu, were among the victims.

A community leader, Oji Osondu, said the herdsmen

attacked members of the community for asking them to leave their domain.

"About two weeks ago, our community asked them to leave. For some years now we don't cultivate our farms again, because after cultivating they will bring their cattle into the farms and destroy everything. When you approach them they will tell you that their cattle did destroy the crops. And that was why this year, our people told them to leave our community so that we could return to our farms.

"Two years ago, our cooperative society cultivated 1,000 hectares of rice, but their cattle destroyed everything and nothing happened. We complained to the Ebonyi State Government and all security agencies, but nothing was done and no compensation was paid," he stated.