

armed herders kill 11 in fresh Benue attack as Ribadu defends FG’s security efforts

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National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu (right) being received in Benue State Government House by Governor Hyacinth Alia... yesterday.

- Says troops cannot be deployed to every community
- IGP orders withdrawal of mobile police from unauthorised duties
- State, local police key to ending killings, Gani Adams tells FG
- Plateau govt denies claims of DSS sabotage in response to attacks

Rather than abate, the spate of killings in parts of the country worsened in the early hours of yesterday, as suspected armed herders launched a renewed assault on the Afia community in the Ukum Local Council of Benue State, killing 11 persons.

The bloodshed occurred just five days after more than 50 farmers were massacred in the Ukum and Logo local councils.

The Ter Ukum, His Royal Highness Iyorkyaa Kaave, disclosed this during a security meeting held in Makurdi, condemning what he described as unprovoked and deliberate attacks on his people by marauding herders.

The monarch alleged that the motive behind the attacks was to displace local farmers and eventually occupy their land. He warned that the situation was worsening, with more lives being lost and many residents still missing.

“As I speak with you, these attacks started on Thursday in Logo and spread to communities in Ukum on Good Friday. We are still counting losses, more corpses are being recovered, and some people are still missing,” he said.

“They killed eleven people on the spot, while several others sustained varying degrees of injuries, with scores still unaccounted for,” he added.

The monarch drew a sharp contrast between the current wave of violent herders and the Fulani herders who once coexisted peacefully with local communities.

“We want the President to know that these Fulani people are different from the ones we settled with in the 70s and 80s. Those ones came in the dry season with their wives, children, and cattle to stay with us. But now, they come with cattle and AK-47s, attack our people in their sleep, flee, and later return to occupy their homes,” he lamented.

Addressing President Bola Tinubu directly, the Ter Ukum declared: “The President should get this clear, we don’t want to settle with murderers. These people are coming with a hidden agenda to kill and occupy, which they are no longer hiding.”

However, the National Security Adviser (NSA), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, has said that it is impossible to deploy security personnel to every village and hamlet across Nigeria, despite ongoing efforts to address the widespread insecurity plaguing the country.

Ribadu made this known yesterday in Makurdi, Benue State, during a visit to sympathise with the people over the massacre of more than 72 residents by suspected Fulani herdsman. He assured the state that the Federal Government is committed to restoring peace and has already begun measures to prevent further attacks.

“Our armed forces are doing well. It is impossible to post soldiers or police to every hamlet. Give us a chance and stop politicising the killings. This will help us to restore peace,” he said.

The NSA also remarked that President Bola Tinubu’s administration inherited a deeply troubled security situation but has recorded significant improvements.

“We inherited an extremely bad government. Things have improved. We’re addressing the issues. To harm is easy, but to fix things takes time. We have considerably reduced the level of violence we met. This, too, we will confront,” Ribadu said.

His comments come a day after Vice President Kashim Shettima failed to visit Plateau State as earlier announced, following a spate of violent attacks in the region. The Vice President’s planned visit was disclosed by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Dr Nentawe Yilwatda, during a weekend visit to Bassa Local Council. However, no official explanation was given for the aborted trip.

Despite concerns over the scale of violence, Ribadu insisted that the nation’s security forces are making progress but cannot be present everywhere simultaneously. He emphasised the need for public support and unity to overcome the security challenges.

“We will defeat it. The entire country is with you,” he told the people of Benue. “I commiserate with the people of Benue and assure you that this is a trying period for all of us, but we are 100 per cent with you.”

Benue State Governor, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia, during the meeting, decried the persistent attacks on the state, saying Benue has faced terrorist violence since 2011. He lamented the displacement of thousands of residents, with 17 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps currently operating in the state.

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MEANWHILE, in response to the persistent wave of killings and attacks in Plateau, Benue, the South-East, and other parts of Nigeria, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, has ordered the immediate withdrawal of Mobile Police (MOPOL) officers from unauthorised duties, particularly those serving private individuals and VIPs.

The directive was issued during a strategic meeting with Police Mobile Force (PMF) Squadron Commanders, aimed at reviewing and strengthening operational responses to the escalating insecurity across the country.

Egbetokun noted that the PMF had deviated from its core mandate, with many officers now serving as escorts and aides rather than responding to internal security threats.

"Regrettably, this foundational mandate has been compromised over time. A significant number of PMF personnel are deployed as escorts, guards, or aides to private individuals and VIPs. This diversion weakens our capacity to respond where needed most," he said.

He ordered all commanders to enforce the withdrawal directive immediately, with a phased but firm return of officers to core tactical duties. The size and structure of PMF squadrons will also be reviewed and streamlined for greater efficiency.

Proffering solutions, the Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yoruba land, Iba Gani Adams, called on the Federal Government to recalibrate Nigeria's security architecture and infrastructure.

While delivering a keynote address at the grand finale of the 2025 Eledumare Festival in Lagos yesterday, Adams stressed that the resurgence of violent killings brings to the front burner the pressing issue of restructuring the Nigerian polity, which would give birth to state and local government police.

Speaking specifically on the insecurity and humanitarian crises confronting the nation in Ondo, Plateau, and Benue states, which have been turned into killing fields in recent weeks, Adams said the barbaric killings outrightly negate the virtues of peace and love, which ought to hold our society together.

He further noted that no nation develops when one section rises against another in mindless attacks.

Adams condemned the unending activities of armed herders suspected of being behind the killings and kidnappings in the three states referenced, the North-Central region, and other parts of the country.

"The government at the centre cannot continue to turn a blind eye to these necessary demands. The time to act is now. We must act decisively in the interest of our people," Adams added.

Relatedly, the Plateau State Government has dismissed reports alleging that the Department of State Services (DSS) deliberately sabotaged its efforts to respond to recent violent attacks on some communities in the state.

In a statement issued yesterday by the Secretary to the State Government, Mr Samuel Jatau, the government described the claims as "misleading, erroneous, and aimed at causing disaffection and acrimony" between the state and the DSS.

The reports, circulated on Facebook and other social media platforms, alleged that the DSS seized weapons procured for the Plateau State Neighbourhood Watch Agency, Operation Rainbow, thereby hindering the agency's ability to counter the recent attacks.

However, the state government refuted the claims, affirming its strong collaboration with the DSS, which it described as a "most reliable partner" in the fight against insecurity. It noted that the security agency has been instrumental in supporting efforts to restore peace across the state.