

My Life Under Threat Over Anti-Grazing Law, Says Ortom

.Herdsmen Kill Four In Southern Kaduna .Kill Two Policemen In Benue .OPC Moves Against Herders In Ondo

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Samuel Ortom

Abuja / Makurdi / Akure – Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State has revealed that his decision to stand on the part of truth and adopt the anti-open grazing Act has exposed his life to constant threats from powerful forces at the federal level.

He, however, vowed to speak the truth at the risk of his own life, insisting that the era where state executives sometimes promote sycophancy and mediocrity was gone for good.

He said this against the backdrop of reactions that trailed his face-off with the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, since the killing of more than 73 people by herdsmen in Benue State.

According to him, he has resolved to offer himself as a sacrificial lamb to ensure that the truth prevailed as he noted that the truth had been suppressed for too long.

Ortom, who spoke with a select State House correspondents in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, at the weekend, said, "The Bible says 'you shall know the truth and the truth will set you

free.’ Nigeria today, we have no business being where we are. We would have been far ahead of where we are today. It’s just that for a long time, we have suppressed the truth.

“But the truth is that I have decided to offer myself. If it will require me to pay the supreme sacrifice for saying the truth, I’m ready to do it because the time has come that we must stop promoting sycophancy and mediocrity.

“We must promote the truth. We must respect the constitution and the rule of law. The constitution and the law of our land is the only thing that can guide us to greater height.

“It’s the only thing that can lead us to where we want to be. It’s the only thing that can promote and project us to rank with other countries that are doing well.

“Was it not just yesterday we said ‘Ghana must go?’ Why is it that on West African soil today the whole world is turning their attention whether in investment or whatever? Ghana has become a reference point against Nigeria.”

The governor noted that with his age and the positions that he had held in government, he was more concerned now with his contribution to humanity, regretting that he was being persecuted for doing the right thing for his people.

He added: “And today, for the persecution that I’m going through, for doing what is right then, I’ve become a target? For saying that look, enough is enough, Stone Age laws should be repealed even if they were laws or if they were policies, we should discard them because they will not help us.

“The truth is that I felt so sad when the minister of defence and followed by the IG of Police were acting the script of Miyetti Allah instead of doing their jobs that they are collecting taxpayers’ money for every month which I’m also involved in.

“How can you say that it’s the Prohibition of Open Grazing and Provision of Ranching Law 2017 in Benue State that has brought those killings?”

Wondering why there were killings attributed to Fulani herdsmen in other states without anti-open grazing law, Governor Ortom explained that “this law is a necessity arising from the killings that were taking place and for us, we sought to bring a permanent solution to the perennial problem of herdsmen and farmers’ clashes.”

He argued that the lack of action against the perpetrators of the killings was deliberate as the promoters of the violence were known to law enforcement agencies.

The governor, however, applauded the media for highlighting the plight of Benue people in the hands of the marauding herdsmen and called for a change of heart from security agencies to bring the problem to a complete stop.

Ortom further said, "So, it's not about the law. It is deliberate. We live in a country where people will come out in the name of Miyetti Allah and issue threats that they are coming to attack, that they will mobilise people to invade the land and take over the land. And even when you report to the authorities, no action is taken and they expect you to keep quiet.

"When you are a leader elected by the people and they are looking unto you for protection, what do you expect me to do? I should speak.

"And of course, when I speak, the media is able to alert the whole world and today, the whole world appreciates the magnitude of the problem that I'm going through.

"How can you live in a state and you have seven IDP camps hosting more than 100,000 people and 60 percent of these people are children who should be in their schools.

"They are being denied their legitimate right, which we as leaders are supposed to give them, because of the non-performance of people who are saddled with sensitive responsibilities in this country to provide security for lives and property.

"So, it is painful and really unfortunate and I expect those people who are responsible for enforcing the laws of our lands and ensuring security for lives and property who have demonstrated incompetence because of what is going on...take for instance, the president directed the IG of Police to relocate to Benue State to ensure that these killings stop.

"The IG came here one day and left and he is sitting in Abuja and he has chosen to send his Force PRO to be insulting me on Channels Television for doing what is right and for him not doing his job."

Herdsmen Kill Four In Southern Kaduna

Meanwhile, suspected Fulani herdsmen have killed four people in Bakin Kogi, a village in Jama'a Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

According to a witness, the incident happened about 10a.m on Sunday.

The witness said the victims were ambushed while returning home from palm wine tapping.

A lady, who sustained serious injuries from gunshots, has been taken to a hospital in Kafanchan.

"The attack took place about 10a.m when they were almost home. We were just rounding off from church when we heard gunshots," the witness said.

"Everybody had to run because we were gripped by fear. They killed four people on the spot while a woman was fatally wounded. They shot her by the chest and she was rushed to the hospital.

"The herdsmen ran to the bush as soon as they committed the inhuman act."

He accused the soldiers deployed in the community of failing to act when the incident happened.

"We expected that the soldiers would have responded by pursuing the herdsmen but they didn't do anything," he said.

According to him, when the soldiers heard that their commander in Kafanchan was on his way to the place where the incident happened, they started pretending to be active.

Herdsmen Attack Police In Benue, Kill Two Cops

In a related development, two of the four police officers who went missing in an ambush in Benue State have been killed while two were found unhurt.

The officers were declared missing after a police patrol team drove into an ambush by suspected herdsmen in Logo Local Government Area Saturday afternoon.

INDEPENDENT gathered that even though Benue State police command originally confirmed that four of its personnel were missing, the number of casualties sustained by the police could be higher.

Competent sources told **INDEPENDENT** that the herdsmen ambushed the police in Azege and set ablaze one of the police vans attached to the team.

Sources told **INDEPENDENT** that the Fulani herdsmen came in three groups, hemmed in the police team and killed two persons.

It was during the gun battle that ensued that the police sustained the casualties.

Even though the police later said two of the missing personnel had been reunited with their team, they could neither confirm nor deny the number of casualties.

According to **INDEPENDENT** source, the herdsmen had used the cover of a forest at Azege and had come from different angles, adding that the police may probably have sustained more casualties had they not been trained personnel.

Because of the ruthlessness and precision of the herdsmen militia, there have been speculations that they may be remnants of Boko Haram members that fled the North East.

Confirming the incident in a statement, Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Moses Yamu, said, "In furtherance of its confidence-building strategy and strengthening its visibility, Police Mobile Force Teams conducted a robust patrol of Ayilemo in Logo LGA today, February 10, 2018.

"However, on their way back to their camp at about 1430hrs, they came under attack of a fully armed group suspected to be herdsmen.

"In the ensuing gun battle, one of the police patrol vans caught fire.

"Efforts are ongoing to locate four of the policemen who are not seen while headcount was conducted. Casualty on the side of the insurgents is being ascertained."

The PPRO, however, said: "The police will not be deterred or relent in its effort to ensure adequate security in areas under threat in the state."

OPC Moves Against Fulani Herdsmen In Ondo

Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) in Ondo State on Sunday said it would no longer tolerate attacks on the people of the state by Fulani herdsmen.

The group directed its members to form vigilance groups in their respective zones in order to prevent the invasion of any part of the state and attacks by the herders.

The state chapter of OPC took the decision at a meeting held in Oba-Ile, Akure North Local Government Area of the state.

Members from all the 18 local government areas of the state attended the meeting where they were asked to be ready to defend the Yoruba land against the invasion of herdsmen.

The congress said it was unfortunate that Fulani herdsmen have constituted themselves into a terror organisation in different parts of the country.

It described the incessant attacks by them in different parts of the state as worrisome and asked Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu to find legal ways of protecting farmers.

It resolved to reunite members of the Gani Adams and Fredrick Faseun factions of the group in the state with a view to ending the factional crisis rocking it.

Victor Olayemi Egbeyemi, state Chairman, urged the Adams and Faseun's factions to come together in the interest of the people of the state.

Egbeyemi said the security issues affecting the state should be enough for the two factions to sheathe their swords, adding that both Adams and Faseun were from the state.

He directed members of the group to meet with community leaders, chiefs and security agencies in order to prevent breakdown of law and order.

The OPC boss said traditional rulers should work with members of the group in order to identify lawful Fulani herdsmen from the criminal ones who had constituted themselves into a security threat.

"We should not wait until they start to kill our people before we plan to defend them. We want to reorganise ourselves to defend the interest of Yoruba people.