

Death Toll Of Benue Killings Rise To 69

By **Tor Vande-Acka** - April 14, 2018

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Makurdi – The death toll of the killings in Ukum Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State has risen to 69, Saturday INDEPENDENT reports.

Herdsmen had also struck at Agboghul village, a suburb of Makurdi town where they killed two persons on Thursday.

This brings the total number of killings in the state to 69 as at yesterday.

Peasant farmers in Tse Gbum, Kpete, Akaanya and Ulam communities all in Ukum LGA said 26 more bodies were recovered in the affected areas on Friday.

The suspected Fulani herdsmen struck the affected areas on Wednesday night killing about 41 persons.

The herdsmen that attacked the communities in Ukum LGA, DAILY INDEPENDENT gathered were led by men clad in Army uniform.

But the State Government which confirmed the two deaths in Agboghul has said it was yet to get details of the number of deaths from the attacks in Ukum.

Acting Governor, who is also the State Deputy Governor, Benson Abounu told newsmen that he is yet to get a detailed report on the killings in Ukum.

When DAILY INDEPENDENT asked the Acting Governor who spoke to newsmen late on Friday afternoon if he had been briefed by the Ukum Local Government Chairmen, Iberlogo Torityokyaa, he said "no".

While he confirmed the attack on Agboghul community, Abounu said he has been briefed that two persons lost their lives during the attack.

He however stated that he was not aware of the details of the Ukum incident and would not wish to speculate on it.

The acting governor who rose from a State Security Council meeting said it was agreed that henceforth proactive measures would be taken to forestall further attacks rather than embark on repelling attacks when they occurred.

He said, "No, the Ukum local government chairman has not briefed me yet.

"In the security meeting we only emphasised the need for security in the state to be proactive rather than being reactive.

"What they have been doing is they only go to repel attacks and return instead of mounting checks at the entrance into the flash points.

"With the previous strategy sometimes before the security men get to where the attacks are taking place, the damage was already done.

"So we have asked them to change strategy and man areas being affected by the attacks to forestall further occurrence."

Youths in Agboghul had vowed that rather than be displaced they would stay and defend their ancestral land.

On the Ukum incident, Abounu said he was yet to be briefed on the matter.

It could be recalled that as at Thursday, 41 persons had lost their lives during the attacks.

However, DAILY INDEPENDENT reliably gathered that 26 more bodies were recovered by locals in the area even as they said the death toll may be higher.

But speaking with our correspondent, an aide to Ukum LGA chairman who would not want his name in print said 26 more corpses were recovered yesterday (Friday) morning.

According to him, "As it is now we have recovered 26 dead bodies; yesterday (Thursday) about 41 persons were killed in Jande Ikura, a community (situated) between Benue and Taraba states.

"We learnt that during the attack in Jande Ikura that left 41 people dead, three bodies recovered were those of men dressed in military uniform.

"So yesterday (Thursday) between 10am and 11am, the same suspected gunmen in Army uniform crossed over (from Taraba State) to some communities in Benue and started shooting and killing people that they were looking for some of their missing personnel.

"They entered Akaanya, Tse Gbum, Kpete which is a riverine area and Ulam all in Benue and killed 26 persons there. Many people are still missing.

"These people came from Taraba around Kente in Taraba to launch the attack."