

Herdsmen Kill Seven In Benue, Ortom Wants FG To Declare Them Terrorists

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NEWS



MAKURDI – Following the killing of seven people by Fulani herdsmen at Tse-Chembe, a community near Anyiin in Logo Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State at the weekend, Governor Samuel Ortom has called on the Federal Government to declare them as terrorists.

The governor's call followed repeated attacks on communities in the state by herdsmen in recent time during which several people were killed.

A community leader in the area, Chief Joseph Anawa, told Sunday Independent that seven persons, including a woman, died on the scene of the attack, while 12 others among them, a nine- year-old boy, had been receiving treatment at two separate clinics in the council area.

Governor Ortom, in a statement issued by Terver Akase, his Chief Press Secretary (CPS), condemned the invasion and killings, describing the situation as unacceptable.

According to the governor, "Declaring the armed herders operating in Benue State as terrorists will end the wave of impunity and guarantee the rule of law.

"Benue State has a law which prohibits open grazing of livestock, and only a terrorist group will deliberately choose to violate the legislation as Fulani herdsmen have done since the law was enacted in 2017.

"The latest of such attacks took place last night at Tse-Chembe community, near Anyiin in Logo LGA, where the herders murdered seven persons in cold blood and left many others badly injured."

Ortom stressed: "No amount of threats and attacks will stop the enforcement of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law of the state."

He, however, commended officers and men of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS) for their prompt responses to distress calls, particularly on Friday, when the people of Tse-Chembe came under herdsmen's attacks.

He called on President Muhammadu Buhari to declare armed Fulani herdsmen killing innocent people in communities of Benue State as terrorists.

Ortom called on the people of the state, particularly those living in the affected areas, to report any suspicious person to security agencies in the state.

He assured the people that his administration would not surrender the state to criminal elements, be they herdsmen or any other group.

Meanwhile, a community leader in the area, Chief Joseph Anawa, told Sunday Independent that the herdsmen that attacked Tse-Chembe included some Jukun militia.

He said those that lost their lives during the incident were Ayem Iorshagher, Solomon Kuma, Tersoo Emberga, Chembe Wisdom and Tertsegha Kinda.

The other two, he said, were Igbo traders in the community, whose names were yet to be ascertained at press time, and a woman who was in transit.

Meanwhile, troops of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), the military spike operation in Benue, Taraba and Nasarawa States, in the early hours of Saturday destroyed herdsmen camp in Arufu, Taraba State.

The troops had earlier killed two suspected herdsmen militia that invaded Chembe community in Logo Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State.

Unconfirmed reports also have it that the troops recovered from one of the dead herdsmen, an AK-47 and 10 rounds of ammunition.

Sunday Independent gathered that the slain herdsmen were among those who had invaded the Chembe community on Friday night and killed two locals, injuring two others in the process.

Information from the locals in the area also revealed that the herdsmen had attacked the community at about 6.45pm on Friday.

They explained that as soon as the troops of OPWS got wind of the attack, they quickly mobilised to the area, trailed the attackers into the hinterland and killed one of them.

The troops further went in pursuit of the remaining herdsmen and came upon them in the wee hours of Saturday morning at their camp at Arufu in neighbouring Taraba State.

Our correspondent learnt that it was at Arufu that the troops killed another herdsman after an exchange of gunfire.

Efforts to get the Commander, OPWS, General Adeyemi Yekini, to confirm or deny the report was not possible, as calls to his phones were ignored and text messages not responded to.



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