

Again, Herders Kill Seven In Benue, Hoodlums Kill Two Soldiers In Ebonyi

● Our Patience Overstretched
— Governor Ortom

**TOR VANDE-ACKA;
SAMSON NWAFOR**
MAKURDI / ABAKALIKI

Suspected Fulani herdsman on Monday night shot to death seven internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the Abagana IDP Camp in Mak-

urdi Local Government Area of Benue State while gunmen killed two soldiers in Ebonyi.

This is even as the state governor, Samuel Ortom, has said that about 70 persons may have lost their lives

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to attacks by herdsmen on Benue communities in the last couple of weeks.

He also noted that the patience of the Benue people was being overstretched by the increased attacks of herdsmen on Benue communities.

Daily Independent checks also revealed that the figures of the dead from the Monday attack might rise as some persons have been hospitalised and are in critical conditions.

The attack led to protests, where youths and some displaced persons blocked the Lafia/Makurdi highway and insisted that troops posted to keep the peace should leave the state, since they were not offering them the desired protection.

Some of the IDPs lamented the recent posting of the new leadership of *Operation Whirl Stroke*, arguing that the attacks on people of the state has tripled in the past few weeks when the posting was made.

Governor Ortom had to drive to the area and calm frayed nerves before the youths opened the road to traffic.

Speaking to newsmen shortly after, the governor said, "From what is happening within the last two weeks, we have lost more than 70

people within the Makurdi, Guma and Gwer-West LGAs alone in addition to what you are seeing here today.

"Many are in the hospital apart from the seven that died in the attack on the IDP camp by these herdsmen militia.

"I want to say that we are being overstretched; our patience is being overstretched and our preaching on rule of law is being overstretched. You can see that the people are fed up. Mr. President must rise up.

"He is the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the president of over 250 ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. They voted him, we all voted him.

"Mr. President, you took an oath of office to secure the lives and property of the people. This is unacceptable, this cannot continue. Mr. President cannot continue to be aloof. Mr. President must rise up to address the nation himself, not his aides.

"Mr. President must tell us where we are headed in this country. This is too much. We are being overstretched and this is not acceptable. The body language, the action and inaction of Mr. President show that he is only the president of Fulani people.

"I have warned over this. I have written to the president and I have written to security



Bola Tinubu, National Leader, All Progressives Congress (APC) (left); President Muhammadu Buhari (middle), and Bisi Akande, former Interim National Chairman, APC, during a closed door meeting at the Presidential Villa in Abuja, Monday night. PHOTO: NAN

agencies that Miyetti Allah anchored a meeting in Yola and threatened that unless we repeal the open grazing prohibition law, nobody would know peace; that they will kill, they will maim, they will rape and do all sorts of things and they have started doing it. And it is amazing that we are becoming a banana republic.

"But what is happening now to me is very clear; Mr. President is just working for the Fulani to take over this country; his body language is what is being played out; Mr. President gives an order, another person counters, min-

ister comes and counters; is it not a shame?

"These attacks started earlier; they were planned, and the point is this government (FG) is not being proactive.

"Just like the First Lady said sometimes ago; where are the men in this country to arise; something is wrong. The president must tell us what is wrong with him so that we can all help him."

He further called on the state governors to work hard and salvage the nation from going into extinction.

He said, "My colleagues, the governors must rise, because after the president

is the governors; we must work hard to ensure that we salvage this country, otherwise, the country is drowning and we must salvage it, otherwise, we will wake up one day and there will be no country.

"You can imagine, if I was not there, that a major road like that was blocked. You can imagine what would have happened. We can't allow youths to take over the place and that is what they are agitating for now and we know a goat does not bite, but when you push it to the wall it bites.

"We are fed up, we don't

want to resort to self-help; we believe in the unity of this country and that's what I've been preaching, but they are overstressing us."

On activities of Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, he said, "The president and the secretary of the herders' group should be arrested. I was told they invited him (the president of the group); they asked him, did you plan to kill Ortom and the man said no and they said okay, you can go.

"What kind of a thing is that? What kind of a country are we? Where are we

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going? Honestly, it is better for me not to be alive than to witness this shame that is happening in Nigeria today under the watchful eyes of Mr President.

"This is not right. I am not the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces; Mr. President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. It is his responsibility to ensure security of lives and property. I can only support and meanwhile that's what I've been doing," he observed.

Gunmen Kill Two Soldiers In Ebonyi

Similarly, gunmen have reportedly killed two soldiers at a checkpoint at the Timber Shade junction area in Afik-

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po North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

The incident which took place about 8.48p.m. on Monday has heightened the tension across the entire state and Afikpo in particular.

This is coming barely 10 days after three policemen on a stop-and-search operations along Nwezenyi axis in Abakaliki were shot dead by gunmen in the state.

It was gathered that the two slain soldiers were a man and woman.

The gunmen, according to a community source, arrived the checkpoint in a white bus and as the military men flagged them down for

a search, they opened fire on them.

The source who pleaded anonymity, told our correspondent Monday night that the situation threw the two busy Amasiri and Afikpo towns into pandemonium, as people scampered for safety.

"It's a very sad situation here," the source said.

They said it was people suspected to be gunmen, who came to the military checkpoint at Timber Shade in white bus.

The source also said, "The military men were said to be conducting their routine stop-and-search, and were

trying to search the white bus when the unknown gunmen opened fire on them. Two of the military men, a man and woman, died. Others escaped the onslaught.

"The area is as quiet as the graveyard now. These bordering villages used to be very busy and people here are farmers and traders. But the moment that happened, people started going home. Nobody is seen outside as I speak to you. Every place is calm. There is fear here now. My brother, the world is about to end."

The army authorities could not be reached as at the time of filing this report.