

## 40 killed in Sunday morning attack in Benue

Uja Emmanuel, Makurdi

No fewer than 40 Idoma farmers in Ekwo-Okpanchenyi, Agatu Local Government Area in Benue State have been killed in an early Sunday morning attack.

The victims' relatives and survivors said they suspected Fulani herdsmen, who numbered over 200.

Sources said the attackers set ablaze over 200 houses.

They allegedly surrounded the entire village, and gunned down those attempting to escape, among them women and children.

Sources said the attackers moved from one compound to another, shooting and killing people.

By dawn, about 40 persons were reported dead. A report claimed 47 were killed.

This is the second time in 10 days that the council area, which is in Benue South senatorial zone, is coming under attack from suspected Fulani herdsmen.

The dead were said to be mourners carrying out the burial rites of two police officers killed last Tuesday in Nasarawa state.

It was gathered that the herdsmen stormed the village on Sunday morning in the middle of the burial rites and shot sporadically at the mourners. Many escaped with bullet wounds.

"The burial rites of the two slain policemen were going on at Okpachanyi village when the armed herdsmen stormed the scene and opened fire on the mourners, killing and maiming the people while many escaped with bullet wounds," a source said.

Governor Gabriel Suswam, who visited the displace camps where the victims have taken refuge, expressed shock and disgust.

The victims are now camped in three centres in Apa Local Government Area of Benue state.

Benue State Commissioner for Works and Transport, Chief John Ngbede told The Nation that the attackers were accompanied by heavily-armed hired mercenaries.