

Taraba bloodbath worse than Boko Haram massacre, says GC

•How 'lie' caused death of 200

From Fanen Ihyongo, Jalingo

It was a black week for the Fulani in Gembu, Sardana Local Government Area of Taraba State.

An estimated 200 Fulani - men, women and children - have been reportedly killed, and many others injured, as the Mambilla community turned against their Fulani neighbours, whose militants, incidentally, had been terrorising and killing innocent rural farmers in recent times.

Governor Darius Ishaku said "a lie" caused the violence.

About 20,000 cows, according to Senator Yusuf Yusuf (Taraba central), were killed and over 5,000 homes burnt while property, estimated to cost millions of naira, were looted or destroyed.

All these happened after four days of hostilities.

Those who managed to escape, some with injuries, have been kept in a secluded place as IDPs to shield them from further attacks.

Sources said there are no adequate medical facilities to treat them.

The Nation gathered that many people were killed in Nguroje (where the crisis started), Sabbal Gudali, Toffi, Mayo Daga, Mayo Sina, Tamiya, Kwara-Kwara, Tungan Lugere and Timjire. 10 people were killed in a Mosque in Wuro Ardo Musa, during prayer.

A headmaster, his wife and seven children were reportedly wiped out.

Languishing in agony, the victims describe the violence as "a well-organised ethnic

manding (GOC) of the 3 Division of the Army, Brig-Gen. Benjamin Ahanotu; Commandant of the 23 Brigade, Yola, Adamawa State Brig-Gen. Bello Mohammed; Commandant of the 20 Battalion in Serti, Lt-Col. Abdullahi Anwar and the Commissioner of Police Yunnana Babas, have temporarily relocated to the area.

Governor Ishaku has set up three committees to end the skirmishes. The first, raised at the beginning of the crisis, is headed by Deputy Governor Haruna Manu.

Another 14-member committee is headed by the Chief of Mambilla. It has five members each from Fulani and Mambilla, one representative each from Kaka, Kambu, Panso and Igbo, whom the governor said have lived there for many years and will tell the truth if the indigenes refuse to do so.

The third is the "Truth and Reconciliatory Committee" made up of religious leaders (Christians and Muslims). The committees are to chart the need to forgive one another and forge ahead.

"I spoke with the Acting President on the intelligence and the cause of the crisis was a lie," he said.

Journalists stopped from visiting horrifying scenes

Scenes of the carnage are so horrifying soldiers

with dignity."

At a security meeting in the Government House, Gen. Ahanotu told Ishaku he had never seen such a gruesome devastation since he started his military career.

According to him, there was serious detestation among the people and they only waited for the opportunity to unleash terror on their neighbours.

"Leaders are not supposed to lie but in Gembu, the leaders are lying because of hatred for their neighbours," he said.

Gen. Ahanotu advised the governor to apply for the extension of military personnel in the warring area to forestall a retaliation.

Minister knocks governor, Speaker

The Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development, Aisha Alhassan, faulted Governor Ishaku and Speaker of the House of Assembly Abel Peter Diah, for the crisis.

Alhassan, who addressed reporters in Jalingo, the state capital, accused the Ishaku administration of "fuelling the crisis by asking people to go and fight".

She said: "Ishaku has failed for failing to perform his primary duty of protecting lives and property. And it is unfortunate that people are calling for a state of emergency in Taraba."

"When crisis broke out in Takum, the governor's

"If the House of Assembly makes moves to impeach him, I will support them. He should work like a governor; Ishaku should wake up and learn from other governors who are performing."

Governor condemns violence

Governor Darius Ishaku held a peace and security meeting when he returned from Germany. The crisis erupted when he was abroad.

Ishaku condemned the violence on the Mambilla Plateau, after listening to stakeholders and security agents and offered his condolences to the affected community.

He noted that the problem with Nigeria is that "we got independence on a platter of gold, so we don't know what freedom and peace is."

Ishaku said the crisis was caused because of a lie, describing the incident as "a sad development."

He ordered security agencies to do their best to restore normalcy.

Speaker's defence

The Speaker, Abel Peter Diah, denied giving land to his kinsmen. He debunked allegations that he sponsored his Mambilla kinsmen to grab land belonging to any Fulani.

"I did not give anybody any land in Nguroje."

"As the Speaker and being a Mambilla, I am not surprised by the accusation," Diah said. He, however, called for

down houses and inflicted injuries on their victims."

Babas added that the Mambilla gave ethnic colouration to the conflict "by conspiring and mobilising their kinsmen for the dastardly acts that were recorded". According to him, 18 bodies were recovered.

The police boss faulted security agents, including the vigilante, for not doing their job because of tribal sentiments.

He said the situation in Gembu is so complex and criminals took advantage to loot and worsen the destruction.

Babas's account corroborates eye-witnesses' version of the cause of the crisis.

But the Fulani Elders' Forum said he downplayed the figure of casualties, saying over 200 Fulani have been buried.

The forum alleged that a local militia was contracted to kill the Fulani and destroy their property, on the orders of the local government Chairman John Yep.

The forum, in a statement, said the crisis began on June 16, when the militia protested the arrest of Umaru CID, a ring leader of the group in Nguroje, by security operatives over a land dispute.

"On getting information about the arrest of the militia leaders, Yep immediately led some Mambilla youths to storm Nguroje, alleging that the arrest was instigated by the Fulani. This led to a total siege on Nguroje and its environs."

Mambilla Alhaji Zubair said the crisis erupted as a result of the arrest of Umaru mambilla, for his alleged involvement in crime.

Representative of the tti Allah Cattle Breeding association, Ahmadu Be, accused the Speaker of sending his men to grab land belonging to Fulani.

Former ambassador to Cameroon republic in action, said the land in Gembu was owned by Mambilla people, being the first to settle on the Plateau.

But of late, he said, Cates of Occupancy wrongly given to the Fulani when the government is sourcing revenue on their stock.

The representative of Fluka accused the government of negligence, adding that the state was informed ahead of time when tension began to brew but it did not both put a quick response.

He added that it was wrong to have a Wikilin Mambilla Nguroje settlement, where there was a substantial Galadima Nguroje.

"Some Mambilla youths have constituted themselves into a lawless group, for by the council chairman, Yep, who calls himself Mambilla, who gloats he must protect all Fulani lands. You not arrest any member of youth group."

According to the representative of the