

Jukun/Tiv crisis: Fear in Taraba as death toll hits 17

THE people of Taraba State are crouching in fear following continuous attacks and killings in the crisis involving Jukun and Tiv people.

The crisis, which began in Kente village of Wukari Local Government Area – the southern part of the state in April last year, has now spilled to seven councils.

The latest violence is taking place in Bali and Gashaka councils of Central zone of the state. Governor Darius Ishaku and his counterpart in Benue State, Samuel Ortom, have not been able to stop the killings.

Death tolls in separate attacks on communities yesterday rose to 17. Over 240 residents were displaced and their homes razed.

Police spokesman, David Misal, confirmed the attacks and killings to *The Nation* on telephone. "Yes, there were incidents of attack. But I am yet to get the details," he said.

In Maigoge settlement of Bali council alone, four persons were feared killed. Two others were gunned down and doz-

By Fanen Ihyongo, Jalingo

ens wounded in Ananum and Akate areas of Donga, witnesses said.

Othaniel Amah, a pastor, said he escaped death narrowly. But his home was torched during the attack.

"My family and I escaped death by the whiskers, but the entire village has been razed. All our belongings have been burnt in the attack suspected to have been carried out by Jibawa Jukun militia groups," he said.

He cried onto security agencies to stop the escalation of hostilities. "Lives and property are being wasted," he said.

Caretaker Chairman of Bali, Mahmud Musa, confirmed the killings in Maigoge. He said four people were killed and six houses burnt in the attack.

Musa disclosed that an 11-man peace and reconciliation committee has been set up in the local council to ensure there is ceasefire.

"We have just finished a security meeting where all the stakeholders have agreed to work towards peace.

"But the only thing that will calm the situation now is the deployment of security. So, we have deployed Civil Defense personnel to Maigoge. But we need more security.

"I have informed the Deputy Governor, Haruna Manu, on the need to draft security to the affected areas and we do hope he will do the needful," he said.

Yakubu Ali, a resident of Akate, said he lost two persons in an attack on Tse Mende and Iornem villages -near Akate in Donga Local Government Area.

Ali said gunmen in numbers attacked Ananum village and burnt the remaining structures that were standing, after an earlier attack had sacked multitudes in the area.

Caretaker Chairman of Donga, Nashuka Ipeyen, said

the body of one person was recovered near Akate. He blamed the killing on Tiv militants.

"Just this morning, Tiv people attacked and killed one person in Akate. It's unfortunate they have been attacking Jukun communities since the last peace meeting," Ipeyen said.

But the President of Tiv Youth Council, Kelvin Katyo, accused the Donga Council Chairman of speaking for the Jukun.

"Ipeyen is an interested party and has turned himself into a Jukun youth leader. Why is he always not aware anytime there is an attack on a Tiv community?

"Nobody is happy with the crisis. It's now clear that the agenda to evict the Tiv out of Taraba has reached an advanced stage and we are calling on the federal government to intervene," Katyo said.

Police spokesman, David Misal, who confirmed the killings to *The Nation*, said policemen have gone there to quell hostilities and get the details, after which he will brief the press.