

illed in the latest wave of violence were 36 villagers in Michihe, Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State on Thursday night; seven persons on Makurdi-Naka-Ankpa Road also in Benue State on the same day (Thursday evening); 10 people during an attack and counter-attack at two villages in Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State yesterday; seven suspected members of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) on Thursday evening when a joint security team raided the group's camp located in a forest between Oyigbo and Eleme local government areas of Rivers State; and three policemen by bandits who attacked the Umutu Police Station in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State.

Thousands of Nigerians have taken to social media to condemn the situation in Benue State in particular, deploring alleged lack of action from the federal authorities to stop the killings.

Twitter users created the hashtag #BenueUnderAttack to draw attention to the killings,

By 7.40pm yesterday, the hashtag had generated over 123,000 tweets.

It was gathered that suspected herders invaded Michihe ward in Katsina Ala Local Government Area on Thursday night unleashing terror, particularly on residents of Utange, Yoyo and Michihe.

Thirty-six bodies of the victims were said to have been recovered.

Some others were still missing at press time.

Photographs purported to be those of the victims were all over the internet yesterday, but the police in the state denied any killings.

They said their personnel sent to the areas found no corpses or graves.

Governor Samuel Ortom had declared at the weekend that he would "no longer announce the deaths of those killed by herdsmen."

But he told the people: "Rise up and defend yourselves with weapons not prohibited by law- bows and arrows, spears, knives, and similar ones."

The late gangster Terwase Akwaza a.k.a. Gana and his men operated from Mbayongo until his death.

Remnants of his followers have continued to carry out attacks on villages, burning houses and killing hapless farmers in the area.

However, events took a different dimension last week as suspected herdsmen allegedly crossed from neighbouring Takum, Taraba State to Katsina Ala Local Government Area and killed many Tiv farmers.

But spokesperson for the state police command, Anene Sewuese Catherine, said the reports of fresh killings in the area were not true.

Her words: "On 28th May, 2021 at about 0080hrs, police teams were deployed to villages in Michihe Council ward, Katsina-Ala Local Government Area, to ascertain the authenticity of the news going viral on social media about thirty six (36) corpses recovered at a scene.

"Upon arrival at the Council ward, the detectives observed that there were no corpses or graves to signify any form of burial and no official reports have been made to the police in the area.

"More police operatives have been deployed to the area for routine patrols and surveillance.

"Members of the public are advised to desist from rumour mongering and hate speeches that create unnecessary tension within the state.

"Media practitioners are also advised to ensure that they practice investigative journalism to ensure accurate and balanced reporting as this will help the police to channel limited resources to the right places at the right time."

Reacting to the reported killings, an ex-aide to former President Goodluck Jonathan, Reno Omokri, posited that "except Benue gets their own Sunday Igboho, these almost daily attacks that have characterised #BenueUnderAttack will continue to happen. If Benue people clash with cows, General @MBuhari will ALWAYS side with cows. Benue needs an Igboho that will side with them #TableShaker"

Co-convenor of the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) movement, Aisha Yesufu, said: "The lives of Benue people must be protected. No Nigerian is more Nigerian than any Nigerian. #BenueUnderAttack"

Nollywood Actress, Kate Henshaw, lamented that "Much as I am trying to focus on other things, the images of bodies lain on the floor in huge numbers has dampened my spirit somewhat.. Why does life mean nothing in Nigeria? To our rulers?? Too much bloodshed....too much #BenueUnderAttack"

Another commentator, FS Yusuf, said: "Ortom needs to know that terrorists have opened a war on his people and he has to prepare his people to fight and protect themselves. Make we forget all the English way we dey speak here. All of us dey mad! They are killing innocent Christians in Benue State #BenueUnderAttack"

"We can't fold our hands and watch anymore. #BenueUnderAttack. People are being killed in their homes and lands and the government is watching. This is a ticking time bomb. Protect all Nigerian citizens!" Aproko Doctor said, while @JajaPhD said: "The pictures are so gory. It is sad that these vulnerable were killed in their homeland by invaders. But to see how they were butchered like cattle evokes a deeper emotion. No one should die like this."