

10 killed, houses burnt in Benue communities



• *Northern CAN condemns persistent killings*

No fewer than 10 persons have been killed by suspected herdsmen in Aondona, Vegav in **Gwer West Local Government Area** of Benue.

The attacks started on Saturday, according to the Chairman of Gwer West Local Government Area, Victor Ormin, on Makurdi-Naka Road, where a Catholic priest, Rev. Fr. Solomom Atongu was shot, while two occupants of his vehicle were abducted.

Fr.V. Atongo, who is the priest of St.John's Quasi Parish, Jimba, is receiving treatment at a hospital in Makurdi.

Ormin raised the alarm that suspected herdsmen had taken over Aondona on Taraku-Naka Road, off Otukpo-Makurdi highway, which they raided from 6pm on Sunday to 4 am yesterday unchallenged despite the presence of a military base in the area.

"They shot and killed people, at the same time set houses ablaze in Aondona town," he said.

A resident, John Akusa, said 10 bodies had been recovered, but the casualty figure might be higher because some people were still missing.

The Nation learnt that of the 15 wards in Gwer Local Government Area, herdsmen have taken over 14, while the residents who are farmers have taken refuge in Naka, the council headquarters.

All access roads leading to Naka have been blocked by the herdsmen.

The state Police Command officers said they were yet to get the report of the crisis.

Meanwhile, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the 19 Northern States and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has condemned persistent killings in Benue.

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It noted that the violence had led to loss of lives and destruction of properties.

A statement by the factional Chairman of Northern CAN, Rev. Yakubu Pam, called on the Benue State Governor, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia, to find a lasting solution to the killings.

“Without prompt and coordinated action, the lives of the citizens he was elected to protect remain in grave danger.

“As the farming season approaches, there is growing concern over whether farmers will be able to cultivate their land.

“The implications for food security and economic stability in Benue State and beyond could be severe.

“We also call on the people of Benue State to remain united and work closely with security agencies to bring an end to these senseless killings.

“Community vigilance, cooperation, and collective resolve are essential in overcoming this crisis.

“We urge the Christian community across Benue State to remain steadfast in prayer.

“We believe that through earnest supplication, purposeful leadership, and unified action, the evil threatening the lives and livelihoods of our people can be overcome. May God grant peace and healing to Benue State and strengthen every effort aimed at restoring justice, safety, and harmony,” he added.