

to combat human trafficking and attract Foreign Direct Investment to the state, at the minister's office, in Abuja, on Tuesday.

Plateau killings: Death toll increases to 27

Lalong orders arrest of Fulani, community leaders

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THE death toll arising from the attack on Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State has increased from 15 to 27, just as Governor Simon Lalong has ordered the arrest of the Ardos and community leaders in the affected communities.

It will be recalled that 15 people were killed in Kwatas community in Bokkos Local Government Area on Sunday following an invasion on the community by gunmen.

A community leader and a former speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Honourable Titus Alams told the *Nigerian Tribune* that the incident had spread to other communities of the local government and the neighbouring Mangu Local Government Area on Monday night and the early hours of Tuesday, leading to additional casualties.

According to him, the death toll in Bokkos had risen from 15 to 22 following another attack in Ruboi and Marish

villages, adding that another three persons had been killed in Mangu.

Alams disclosed that houses were burnt during the attack, including his personal house at Kwatas village, calling on the people to be calm and be vigilant.

When contacted the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) ASP Ubah Gabriel who said he had not been briefed on the spread, added that two of the five victims who were receiving treatment at Bokkos hospital died in the early hour of Tuesday.

Apparently disturbed by the recent killings in Bokkos Local Government Area, Governor Lalong has ordered the arrest of the Ardos (Fulani leaders) and other community leaders in the troubled part of the state.

The governor who gave the order at a meeting with the stakeholders which comprised heads of security agencies, traditional rulers, community leaders and Ardos representing the Fulani community on Tuesday, at the Government House, insisted that the perpetrators

must be fished out immediately.

The governor said he would not allow the situation to degenerate further and make nonsense of the efforts already put in place to restore peace to the state, adding that nobody is above government.

"How can they say that people are killed and there is no arrest? Are those killing others spirits? I don't think you can kill 15 human beings and claim you are spirits and there is not arrest.

"Commissioner of Police, you should take the community leaders and the Ardos with you so that they can tell you those behind these killings. By the time you go to cell, you will bring out those people that are doing it.

Speaking earlier, the state Commissioner of Police, Mr Isaac Akimoyede, said he held a meeting with the community leaders last Saturday, based on intelligence where he warned against any breach of the peace.

"Since I have been in the state since February, no event of this magnitude has

happened. We have been investigating the incident in Mangu and then this one. We cannot continue in this situation in the state. The security agencies have resolved that those people behind the killings must be arrested no matter how highly placed. Peace must return to this state as we cannot continue in this situation."

In another development, a faction of the caucus of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the House Representatives on Tuesday raised the alarm over the continuous genocide rocking Plateau, Kaduna and other parts of the country by terrorists unchallenged by security forces.

Addressing newsmen in Abuja shortly after the plenary, the group in an address by Solomon Maren representing Mangu and Bokkos Federal Constituency of Plateau State, challenged President Muhammadu Buhari to show sincerity and commitment to ending the blood-letting which had claimed several lives without arrest or prosecution of the perpetrators in the last few days.