

Fulani bandits murder man, wife, 4 children in Benue

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GUNMEN suspected to be Fulani bandits on Thursday attacked Abagana community, opposite the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, off Makurdi-Laafia Road.

Six members of a family, the father, mother and their four children, were among the nine people who were murdered in the attack.

The bandits cut off the heads of some of the victims and went away with them.

Members of the community who spoke to ***Saturday Tribune*** disclosed that the invaders arrived in the community around 9.00 p.m. and turned the place into a slaughterhouse.

One of the locals said: "Last night (Thursday), at about 9.00 p.m., suspected Fulani bandits invaded Abagana community, opposite IDP camp, and killed many people.

"Eight corpses, including those of children, have been recovered. Eight other people were seriously injured and they have been taken to hospital for treatment.

"Some of the victims were beheaded and the heads taken away. A man and his wife and four children were murdered in the attack."

The Special Adviser on Security to the state governor, Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Hembra (retd), confirmed the

attack which he described as "unprovoked."

Hembra gave names of those killed to include Gbashaor Acho, Gbashaor Joseph, Anshe Dekera, Ancho Kpor, Eunice Gbashaor, Sewuese Gbashaor, Terlumun Ajoh, Emburga Gbashaor and Donald Gbashaor.

He stated that the casualty figure might rise as the cases of some persons who were shot and wounded were critical.

The governor's aide said two of those killed were IDPs while the bandits stole two motorcycles belonging to the villagers.

Contacted, the state Commissioner of Police, Wale Abass, confirmed the attack, saying he was at the scene of the incident.

"I am at the scene of the incident. The moment we leave here, the PPRO will furnish you with the details," Abass said.

Meanwhile, the state governor, Samuel Ortom, has attributed renewed killings in the state to the "inciting utterances" of prominent Nigerians.

In a statement issued by his media aide, Terver Akase, to condemn Thursday's killings at Abagana, Ortom said: "Fulani pastoralists have been made to believe that Benue and all other lands in the country belong to them, a fallacy that

has prompted the herders and their sponsors to recruit fighters from Niger, Mali, Chad and other countries to go on a violent rampage, in a bid to conquer the country."

The statement said: "The governor recalls how some individuals who should be seen as nationalists have made statements in the recent past implying that the people of Benue will only know peace when Fulani herdsman are integrated into Benue communities and their cattle allowed to graze freely.

"He (Ortom) attributes the ongoing attacks on innocent people of the state to the inciting utterances of the said individuals."

The governor described the renewed attacks on the state by "terrorist Fulani herdsman" as a declaration of war, adding that the latest attack on Thursday on Abagana, a community with one of the largest numbers of internally displaced persons, in Makurdi, where nine persons were murdered, reaffirmed his earlier statements that "the terrorists" were bent on taking over the people's ancestral lands."

He condemned the Abagana killings and reaffirmed the resolve of the government and the people of the state never to surrender their lands to anyone.