

15 killed in Benue communities

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At least, 15 people were said to have been killed in a renewed attack on several communities by suspected herdsmen in Katsina Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

According to sources from the local government, the crisis started on Friday when gunmen suspected to be armed herdsmen invaded Utange council ward on Friday and later on Saturday, proceeded to Kpav, particularly Dikpo and Imande Gberihwa where they unleashed terror on the residents.

As of Sunday morning, several people have been declared missing, while many others were said to have fled the troubled communities.

According to locals in the council who did not want to be named, told Nigerian Tribune on the phone on Sunday, "the killing started on Friday when some armed herders invaded some com-

munities in Utange council ward and killed several people.

He added, "The same attackers, on Saturday night, moved to the entire community of Kpav, particularly Dikpo and Imande Gberihwa and killed more people.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Katsina Ala Local Government Area, Justine Shaku, who confirmed the attack, said that 11 people were killed, while seven others were injured.

According to him, "Several houses were burnt and food items destroyed," adding, "there was no provocation, but the bandits have been carrying out the killings over time.

Shaku said that as at the time of filing this report on Sunday evening, he and the member representing Sankera federal constituency in the House of Representatives, Solomon Wombo, were holding meeting with the locals, making arrange-

ment to purchase caskets and also settle hospital bills of the victims.

Responding, the state governor, Hyacinth Alia, condemned the attack and reassured the people of the state that those responsible would be made to face justice.

In a statement issued on Sunday by his Chief Press Secretary (CPS), Kula Tersoo, said, "the governor expresses his condolences to the families of the casualties and the entire community of Kpav, particularly Dikpo and Imande Gberihwa, following the vicious attack by the armed herdsmen.

Alia described the loss of innocent lives and the destruction of homes in the attack as a painful reminder of the challenges his administration encounters in the journey for peace and security in the state.

He said, "this measure of cruelty is offensive and will not be countenanced".

The governor assured that his government has already

deployed security forces to the affected localities and promised to enhance security steps to track the aggressors and forestall further incidents.

"To the people of the state, we want to encourage you that your security is our top priority. We recognise the anxiety and fear that such incidents can produce, but we are committed to strengthening peace and security in our communities.

"Collectively, we will rise above this challenge and strengthen our willpower to protect our homes and loved ones.

"We appeal to everybody to remain wary and report any doubtful activities to the authorities. It is only through our concerted efforts that we can achieve longstanding peace," the statement read in parts.

Efforts to get the state's Police Public Relations Officer, Catherine Anene, were not successful as she did not pick up her cell phone.