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Bloodbath in Benue

MARCH 16, 2015 : DANIEL GBABO AND KAYODE IDOWU ■ 98 COMMENTS

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SUSPECTED Fulani herdsmen numbering about 70 on Sunday slaughtered 95 people, mostly women and children in Egba, Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

A survivor, who gave his name simply as Oche, said the herdsmen arrived the village between 5am and 6am and started attacking them in their houses.

Oche did not give the number of those wounded but he claimed to have seen 80 dead bodies being evacuated by security operatives and volunteers.

He said, "They came with arrows, locally-made guns and knives when most of us were still asleep and started killing us. It was a very bad day for us. I believe that those killed are between 95 and 100 as I counted up to 80 bodies being taken away by people in uniform."

"Most of those slaughtered were women, children and the aged. Almost all the houses in the community were razed by the attackers."

But the state Police Commissioner, Hyacinth Dagala, who confirmed the attacks, said records before him showed that 30 people had been confirmed dead.

He added that he had already directed the Area Commander to ensure that adequate security was provided in the area.

A lawmaker representing Apa/Agatu in the state House of Assembly, Audu Sule, said that over 60 bodies were evacuated from the village.

The lawmaker, who said the survivors were now taking refuge in Obagaji/Ogbalu, the headquarters of Agatu LGA, claimed that the herdsmen escaped to Nasarawa State after the attack.

The Benue State Peoples Democratic Party deputy governorship candidate, John Ngbede, told The PUNCH on the telephone that the Federal Government needed to station troops in communities in the state prone to attacks by herdsmen.

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A female lawyer and activist, Sonia Ajoko, called on the state and federal governments to immediately send relief materials to the survivors.

Ajoko said, "The loss is monumental going by what we heard. Women and children and the elderly were killed. I therefore call on governments at all levels to declare a day of mourning and commiseration with the bereaved families."

On February 11, 2015, about 30 people were feared killed with many sustaining varying degrees of injuries in the Logo LGA of Benue State, after suspected Fulani herdsmen sacked over 24 communities and villages in the area.

Some of the affected communities were Chembe, Tse-Mue, Tse-Shigbe, Mgbakpa and Oragbai all in the Ukemberagya council ward, which is four kilometers away from Anyiin, Governor Gabriel Suswam's country home.

Tragedy averted at IDP camp, four suicide bombers killed

The Army has averted what would have been a major tragedy at the Internally Displaced Persons camp in Maiduguri by successfully defusing Improvised Explosive Devices planted by a suspected Boko Haram agent.

The camp is within the Government Girls Secondary School in Yerwa, the centre of the town and a few metres away from the Borno Express Motor Park, one of the three places attacked a week ago by Boko Haram insurgents.

Loud explosions from the scene of the destruction made many residents of the troubled Maiduguri to desert the streets as they felt that a fresh bomb attack by Boko Haram insurgents had taken place.

A member of the youth vigilante, Ba'ana Goni, said the suspected Boko Haram agent, who was earlier arrested by soldiers, had been living in the camp for about five months as an IDP.

One of the IDPs, who declined to be identified, told journalists on the telephone on Sunday that the explosives were buried by the agent, who, according to him, fled from Bama and took refuge in the camp.

He explained that the agent was arrested in a compound allegedly used as a bomb-making factory by Boko Haram.

The IDP said, "We were about performing Magrib prayers in the camp when soldiers in patrol vehicles arrived and directed us to assemble at a particular point.

"A few minutes later, they told us that two bombs were planted in the camp but that we should not panic as the perpetrators had promised to take them to the place where the devices were planted.

"A soldier brought out a youth who was blindfolded from one of the patrol vehicles. The soldier then unmasked the youth and to our surprise, he was someone that we all knew because of his friendly disposition.

"The soldiers told us to remain in one location as they were going to defuse the IEDs. A soldier then fired at the direction of one of the planted explosives and it immediately went off. Another did the same at the direction of the second bomb and it exploded without causing harm to anybody."

Saharareporters said in its report on Sunday that a teenage girl blew herself up when security agents tried to arrest her in Kaga LGA, Borno State. She was the only casualty.

Also, three suicide bombers heading towards a military checkpoint along the Damaturu-Maiduguri Road were killed before they could reach their final destination.

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