

Fulani herdsmen kill 20, raze church in Enugu community

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Fulani herdsman

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No fewer than 20 persons in Ukpabi Nimbo, an agrarian community in the Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, were killed during an attack by Fulani herdsmen on Monday.

It was learnt that scores of armed cattle rearers, reportedly numbering more than 100, stormed the sleepy community in the early hours of Monday.

A national newspaper had reported on Monday that the herdsmen had recruited scores of gunmen from Nasarawa State for the impending attack on the Enugu community.

Sources in the community said sporadic gunshots were heard as

the rampaging herdsmen moved to sack villagers from their homes.

It was gathered that the invading cattle rearers carried guns, bows, arrows, machetes and swords to execute their mission.

The invaders also set a Catholic church in the area on fire.

Many of the villagers were said to have escaped to neighbouring communities in the Uzo-Uwani area, but it was gathered that people in the nearby towns were also worried about possible attacks from the herdsmen.

A police source told our correspondent that as of the time of filing this report, the corpses of five persons, who died in the attack, had been recovered.

It was also learnt that the corpses, which were deposited at the morgue in Bishop Shanahan Hospital, Nsukka, were recovered from farmlands.

There were indications that more bodies would be recovered as a combined team of police and military personnel, who moved into the community to quell the attack, had yet to reach all the affected areas.

But sources in the Ukpabi Nimbo community said more than 20 of their kith and kin were killed before help could come.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Police Command, Mr. Ebere Amaraizu, said the total number of casualties could not be ascertained as of the time of filing this report.

Amaraizu, who spoke with our correspondent on the telephone, said the situation in the community had been brought under

control, adding that the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Nwodibo Ekechukwu, had led other officers of the command to the affected areas.

The PPRO stated, "We moved in to ensure that the situation did not degenerate beyond control and right now, everything is under control.

"The Commissioner of Police is there with other officers and men and the area is being secured.

"We can't give the total number of casualties yet; it is when the operation is concluded that we will collate figures and give a definite number."

Many members of the Ukpabi Nimbo community, who are mostly farmers, have their homes around their farmlands.

It was gathered that several houses as well as farms and crops were also destroyed by the herdsmen.

Our correspondent learnt that the herdsmen had previously fallen out with the villagers over their grazing activities in the community.

Sources in the community disclosed that the villagers had been resisting the use of their farmlands as grazing fields by the herdsmen.

Our correspondent learnt that the situation further degenerated after some herdsmen, who operated in Ukpabi Nimbo and other communities in the Uzo-Uwani area, claimed that their cows were missing.

There were also allegations by the herdsmen that some of their

colleagues were killed in the area.

The villagers alleged that most of the herdsmen, who were involved in Monday's attack, were brought from Nasarawa State by other Fulani cattle rearers who were already operating in Enugu.

Our correspondent gathered that before the herdsmen struck on Monday, there was tension in Ukpabi Nimo and other communities in the Uzo-Uwani area over rumour that about 500 herdsmen were mobilising to attack them.

The villagers were said to have alerted the Enugu State Government and the leadership of the Enugu State Police Command after they were informed of an imminent attack by herdsmen.

According to sources, the Chairman, Transition Committee, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Cornell Onwubuya, who was said to have informed Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi and the police commissioner of the fears nursed by villagers, also met the leadership of the Hausa-Fulani community in the area over the matter.

Interestingly, the rumoured planned attack by 500 herdsmen was the subject of an emergency stakeholders meeting in the Uzo-Uwani area council at the weekend, hours before the cattle rearers struck.

The meeting, reportedly also deliberated on the incessant herdsmen-related problems in the area including several cases of murder, kidnapping and rape recorded in the recent past.

At the meeting, Onwubuya reportedly explained that some leaders of the Hausa-Fulani community had confirmed the

rumoured plan by the herdsmen to launch an attack on the area.

Also at the said emergency stakeholders meeting, leaders of the Hausa-Fulani community in Enugu reportedly assured their hosts that they would take urgent steps to avert the planned attack