

# Plateau: Herdsmen threaten reprisal over killings

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The Chairman of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Plateau State branch, Mallam Nuru Abdullahi, has said that herdsmen would be forced to defend themselves if no efforts were made to curtail the new wave of cow theft and killing of herdsmen in the state.

Abdullahi said that in the last few weeks about 1,600 cows were stolen while five herdsmen were killed by suspected cow rustlers.

Speaking to our correspondent in Jos on Monday, Abdullahi said that just on Sunday, a herdsman was killed in Barkin Ladi and about 36 cows stolen from him.

Abdullahi said, "We are just on the way to bury the latest victim. He was killed on Sunday by some suspected youths and about 36 cows of his stolen. We have petitioned the governor and have asked that he should take steps to forestall a recurrence."

In the petition, a copy of which was made available to our correspondent, the herdsmen stated that from January till date, 1,653 cows were stolen but due to the efforts of Operation Safe Haven, 1,591 of the cows were recovered with the whereabouts of 62 cows still unknown.

The petitioners recalled that in February, some rustlers allegedly killed a herder and rustled 13 of his cows into Kanakon village of the Fan district, adding that the cows were traced to a particular family, who refused to release the cows.

The petition further stated that the latest incident happened on May 5, 2016 when some youths, armed with AK47 rustled 45 cows grazing around Ndig village and took them to Foron.

It said, "Efforts of the men of the Operation Save Haven of Sector 7 led to the recovery of two cows which had been slaughtered and the meat shared among the people. As a result of that, an emergency meeting was called by the Sector 7 commander in Fan and Foron communities."

Meanwhile, the Media Officer, OPSH, Capt. Ikedichi Iweha, on Monday, warned members of the public against taking the law into their hands over cow rustling.

Iweha urged members of the public to explore the reconciliatory avenues for settling dispute provided by the task force.

He said, “We have consistently identified cow rustling as one of the triggers of crisis on the Plateau and we have always dealt with it adequately. However, we will not allow any group to take the law into their hands under whatever guise. Stolen cows are being recovered and handed over to their owners.”

Iweha disclosed that five cattle rustlers, who killed a Fulani herdsman and rustled 32 cows and 30 sheep in the Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State have been arrested.

Iweha said that 19 cows and all the sheep were recovered from them.

He said “Five suspects are now in our custody. We are tracking the remaining cows because the cattle were scattered and some have been sold. So, we are tracking them and making arrests as we go. We have traced some to Bukuru and by the time we round off the operation, we will be able to recover the remaining.”

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