

# Two slain after attending Catholic priests' burial in Benue

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**Umar Muhammed, Justin Tyopuusu and John Charles**

Two people have been killed after attending the burial of the two Catholic priests and 17 parishioners killed by suspected Fulani herdsmen in Benue State.

The PUNCH learnt on Thursday that the attack occurred along the Naka/Makurdi Road on Tuesday.

The deceased were said to be riding on a motorcycle, popularly known as okada, on their way from the burial when they were reportedly ambushed by herdsmen and slaughtered.

A native, who spoke to one of our correspondents on condition of anonymity, said, “The duo was returning from the burial of the Catholic priests and the parishioners when they were attacked by herdsmen.

“The Naka/Makurdi highway has been abandoned since herdsmen invaded Naka a few weeks ago. Anyone coming to Makurdi from Naka has to pass through the major road to Taraku, making the journey, which is 30 minutes’ drive, to become two-and-a-half hours journey.

“I think the deceased just decided to take the route, unfortunately, they were killed.”

Efforts to get the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, ASP, Moses Yamu, were not successful as he did not respond to calls placed to his line.

However, Governor Samuel Ortom, confirmed the incident while receiving the Nobel laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka, who paid him a visit on Thursday.

“Killing is still ongoing; just on Tuesday, two people returning from the burial were killed along the Naka/Makurdi Road,” the governor said.

Meanwhile, the Chairman, Yorro Local Government Area of Taraba State, Joseph Sonweri, said six persons died during a crisis in his LGA, adding that the cause of the mayhem had yet to be ascertained.

He, however, said security agencies were on the trail of the boy, who allegedly spearheaded the attack.

“I can’t tell you exactly what happened now, because we are still trailing the boy that was said to have led the attack. He is on the run and his family has deserted their house.

“We put a call through to him early in the morning but his line is off now; so, we are trailing him.

“It is until we get him or any of his accomplices that we can know exactly what happened,” he said.

The traditional ruler of Yorro, Chief Ado Adamu Mazan, who condemned the killings, told one of our correspondents in a telephone interview that the case had been reported to the Commissioner of Police in the state.

Also, no fewer than 192 persons have been killed by unknown gunmen suspected to be Fulani herders in the Awe Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, according to a resident, Joseph Kureve.

Kureve, who spoke with one of our correspondents at the Internally Displaced Persons' camp in Nasarawa, noted that communities in the Awe LGA started having problems with the Fulani herders after the Benue State Government enacted its anti-open grazing law.

He expressed worry that over 160 villages in the Awe LGA had been deserted as a result of persistent herdsmen's attacks.

He said, "We are sick and tired of Fulani herders' attacks on our communities. About 192 of our people have been killed and over 160 villages in Awe LGA have been deserted following the unabated attacks on our communities.

However, the Vice-President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo on Wednesday in Nasarawa State said the Federal Government had put in place the necessary security arrangements to ensure the return of the IDPs in Nasarawa State to their homes.

Osinbajo made the statement when he paid a working visit to IDPs camps in Awe, Kyetor, Agyaragu all in the Obi Local Government Area of the state.

He said, "It is our own duty to secure your lives and properties, and that is the reason I am here to ensure your safe return to your homes. I am here to see for myself, to hear what is happening in the state. I was already briefed on what is happening and that is why the Federal Government approved N10bn for IDPs in affected states."

Earlier, the Nasarawa State Governor, Tanko Al-Makura, said the Fulani herder/farmers' crisis dated back to time immemorial, adding that the recent enactment of the anti-open grazing law by the Benue State Government brought a fresh twist to it.

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