

# Suspected herdsmen kill 42, sack 12 Taraba villages

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At least, 42 people mostly women and children are said to have been killed across 12 villages in the Lau Local Government Area of Taraba State, local residents told our correspondent on Wednesday.

Mr Dauda Marafa, who hails from the area, told our correspondent on the phone that armed militiamen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen on Sunday invaded communities in the local government, killing anybody in sight.

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“The attacks started on Sunday evening and as of the last count this morning (Wednesday), 42 people have been killed.

“The villages so far affected include Bujum, Yilti, Bunzung, Sabon Gida, Kwajafa, Sobon Layi and Budon.

“Other villages that have been sacked by the Fulani herdsmen militia are Banga Dutse, Bawa Garki, Mayo Lope and Kpanti Ladi.

“Over 2,000 displaced persons are currently taking refuge at the Negatavah primary and secondary schools in Jalingo metropolis and more are still trooping in since Sunday when the attacks started.”

Marafa lamented the failure of security agencies to deploy their men in the area, saying the casualty figure might rise as attacks were still ongoing.

The state Chairman, Nigeria Union of Teachers, Peter Julius, who also hails from the area, said 19 of those killed were from five neighbouring villages.

He called on the Federal Government to urgently draft security men to the area to stop the attacks from spreading.

But the Police Public Relations Officer, ASP David Missal, who confirmed the attacks to our correspondent, said six people were killed.

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He explained that SAR and Mopol commanders had temporarily relocated to the areas under attack to restore peace to the affected villages.

“Apart from the deployment of our patrol team in the area, the Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations have been going there and coming back on a daily basis for the past three days to monitor the situation,” Missal added.

The Senior Special Assistant to Governor Darius Ishaku on Media and Publicity, Mr Bala Dan-Abu, who condemned the renewed attacks in the state, called on the Federal Government to arrest the situation.

“We want the Federal Government to do something more concrete in ending the spate of killings in the state. The governor has no control over security personnel in the state, so we are looking up to the Federal Government to direct security agencies to arrest the situation,” he said.

Dan-Abu added that the governor had directed the leadership of the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency and the officials of the state Ministry of Health to the area to assess the damages and provide succour to the affected villagers.

“We are also searching for displaced people so that we can provide adequate protection, care, treatment and relief materials for them.

“This is because when attacks like this happen, people always run to where their relations are but we are doing everything within our means to bring them together, foster peace, protection and general well-being of our people. We are also appealing to people to give peace a chance in Taraba State.”

He added that the state government was also engaging stakeholders to put an end to the crisis in the state.