

Ortom, cousin clash over fresh killing in Benue

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Gov. Samuel Ortom of Benue State

John Charles, Makurdi

Governor Samuel Ortom and his cousin, who is a House of Representatives candidate of the All Progressives Congress in Benue State, Terhide Utaan, have clashed over who was responsible for the Wednesday's attack on Iye community in the Guma Local Government Area of the state.

Gunmen suspected to be herders had on Wednesday unleashed a fresh attack on Iye community and killed two people.

The attack happened barely 15 hours after suspected Fulani herdsmen killed 16 people in Agatu community.

The latest attack on Iye community in Guma had thrown up accusation and counter-accusation by the Peoples Democratic Party and the APC in the state.

Utaan, who is contesting the Guma/Makurdi House of Representatives' seat on the platform of the APC, accused the Ortom-led government of being behind the attack on Iye community.

Ortom and Utaan hail from Guma Local Government Area of the state.

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Utaan, who addressed journalists at his Jime/Ode campaign office in Makurdi, said the Ortom-led government had been instigating violence in the council area through the state-sponsored livestock guards.

Utaan alleged that the governor was sponsoring violence in the council area because he failed in his bid to allow internally displaced persons in the state to vote in their camps.

He said, “The Independent National Electoral Commission had at a stakeholders’ meeting agreed that the displaced persons should be allowed to return to their ancestral homes to participate in the elections.

“Having lost at the stakeholders’ meeting, the governor started creating violence because he had intended to use the IDP camps to rig the poll in favour of his party. We have it on good authority and testimonies of the people that the PDP’s livestock guards were behind the violence.

“What happened yesterday (Wednesday) at Iye community was a state-sponsored violence using the livestock guards; they are not herdsmen.

“Ortom has imported military and police uniforms and has shared them to livestock guards. He has also given out motorcycles to them.”

Utaan called on the Federal Government to ensure that all the allegations he raised were investigated.

But the Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Terver Akase, said the opposition party was already in a panic mood, which, he said, necessitated the allegations against Ortom.

Akase said, “The APC is in a panic mood because of the defeat that is staring them in the face.”

Akase, who confirmed that Iye community was attacked on Wednesday night, said that Fulani herdsmen attacked the community.

The CPS accused the APC leaders of being responsible for the herdsmen’s attacks on the state.

He said, “The APC is responsible for the killings in the state; it is true that Iye community was attacked by herdsmen yesterday (Wednesday).”

While defending his principal, Akase said, “Ortom is committed and determined not only to end the killings but also to stop attacks on Benue communities.

“The governor enacted a law and so the same governor cannot turn around to inflict violence on his people. Livestock guards do not carry arms; they are to cooperate with the conventional police in implementing the law.

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“Where was he (Utaan) over the years when the APC applauded the governor for signing the grazing bill into law. Ortom is a defender of the Benue people; he can’t harm anyone.”