

Five feared dead, three injured in fresh Jukun/Tiv crisis

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No fewer than five persons reportedly lost their lives while three others have been hospitalised following renewed attacks between the Jukun and the Tiv in the Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State.

The casualties were confirmed to our correspondent on Friday by the caretaker Chairman of Wukari LGA, Daniel Adi.

The attack is coming barely four days after the deputy governors of Taraba and Benue states met in Wukari and issued a communiqué on the resolution of the crisis.

Adi stated that four persons were still missing, adding that several houses were burnt in an attack on the outskirts of Wukari on Friday morning.

It was learnt that the attack on Ikyaior village (a Tiv community) by suspected Jukun militia led to the reprisal on a village near Wukari on Friday morning.

Meanwhile, the caretaker chairman has called for the immediate withdrawal of security agents deployed in Wukari, accusing them of sparking off the renewed attacks in the area.

Adi told our correspondent in a telephone interview that personnel of the Special Forces on Wednesday killed over 80 cows belonging to the Fulani herdsmen at Bongo village near Kente which led to the attack on Ikyaor village on Thursday night.

He said, “After the peace meeting with the deputy governors of Taraba and Benue states, we called on our Tiv brothers to return and many of them have returned to Wukari.

“It was the killing of the cows by the Special Forces that led to these attacks. Since the attack on the Special Forces by the Fulanis which led to the killing of two soldiers last month, the Special Forces don’t want to see cows again.

“I actually don’t know what led to the killing of the cows, but for whatever reason, the Special Forces should follow the path of dialogue. We want peace, but the Special Forces are becoming a problem to us, so they should leave. Five persons were killed in the renewed attack and three persons were injured.”

Efforts to get the reaction of the Army Commanding Officer of Ada Barracks, Takum, to the chairman’s allegation failed as his line was switched off.

In a related development, the Parish Priest of All Saint Pastoral Area, Ikyaor, Rev. Fr. Livinus Orji, has decried the looting of the church property by Jukun youths, whom he said attacked Ikyaor on Friday.

Orji said the youths looted the church’s property and his personal belongings, adding that his pleas to them fell on deaf ears.

He said, “I saw some of them coming into Wukari from Ikyaor around the General Hospital with my gas cooker, air conditioner, mattresses, doors and so many other things they carried from the Parish house and I pleaded with them to give me my property but they refused.

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“I told them I am a priest and I am not a Tiv man, but they ignored me. I want to call on the government to quickly intervene and bring an end to this crisis. The Parish is grounded now and cannot function.”

A former Special Adviser to the Taraba State Governor, Orbee Uchiv, told our correspondent that over 100 houses were vandalised in Ikyaio.

According to him, 50 computers from his school were carted away and the entire school blocks razed by the attackers who invaded the village from Wukari.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP David Misal, confirmed the attack but said he was not aware of casualty figures, adding that he had not been properly briefed.

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