

**METRO PLUS**

# Nine killed, two policemen missing in fresh Benue attacks

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Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu

## **John Charles, Makurdi**

No fewer than nine persons were early hours of Wednesday reportedly killed in separate attacks in the Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State by gunmen suspected to be members of a militia.

It was gathered that three people were killed at Jooter, a border community between Benue and Taraba states. Six others, among them a nursing mother, were reportedly killed at Mbamena settlement.

The first incident at Jooter was said to have been perpetrated by people suspected to be Jukun militia from Taraba State while the Mbamena attack was allegedly carried out by local militia from Tongov area who were out on reprisal.

It was further gathered that the militia gang belonging to a kingpin in Ujoondo had three days ago, invaded the Tongov community of Katsina-Ala, killing one person, a development which sparked off the reprisal.

On the Jooter attack by suspected Jukun militia, a local who spoke to our correspondent on condition of anonymity, said the militiamen suspected to be from Taraba State, stormed the border community at about 4am through Wukari and shot sporadically.

According to the local source, the latest attack came without any provocation, adding that about three Tiv farmers lost their lives while over 200 houses were also destroyed.

The source intimated further that the Jukum militia allegedly operated unchallenged for almost three hours despite the presence of special forces in Wukari, about two kilometres away from the attacked community.

Confirming the incident, Caretaker committee chairman for Ukum Local Government Area, Mr Tortyokaa Ibellogo, said six people were killed in the two attacks but accused the Jukuns of being behind the attacks.

The chairman said, “To the best of my knowledge, this is supposed to be a crisis between the Tiv and Jukun in Taraba State and has nothing to do with Benue. In my state, Benue, we have Jukun in Abintse and Wurukum in Guma and Makurdi, living peacefully with the Tiv people.

“I want to call on the Inspector General of Police, Chief of Army Staff and the President to, as a matter of urgency, intervene in this crisis. Already, we are trying to maintain a social distance to face the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected Benue, Nigeria and the entire world.” Ibellogo concluded.

However, the Benue State Command Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Catherine Anne, confirmed that three unidentified corpses were recovered in Jooter but declined comment on Mbamena.

She said, “Incident at Jooter is confirmed. Three unidentified corpses have been recovered. Two officers on duty in the area yet to be found. Investigation is still in progress.”

The force commander, Operation Whirl Stroke, Major General Adeyemi Yekini, said the situation was under control as troops had been drafted to the affected areas.

*“As early as 4am today,our troops went and stationed there and we are not aware of anyone killed as at that time and none of our officers is missing,” Yekini explained.*