

# Benue community demands apology, compensation over NAF attack

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Gov. Samuel Ortom of Benue State

## John Charles Makurdi

The Agbaduma-Odejo community in the Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State has demanded compensation and unreserved apology from the Nigerian Air Force for launching an attack on it without provocation.

The attack reportedly led to the death of one Ochejele Abu and injury to several others.

The community called on the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), to discipline the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar, who allegedly ordered the attack on the Odejo village without any provocation.

A statement by the President, Agbaduma Community in Odejo, Mr Damian Onehi, said it was regrettable that air force personnel, who were supposed to protect the lives and property of the citizens, could go on to kill, destroy and displace innocent persons in the area without provocation.

Onehi explained that on March 23, 2020, men of the NAF invaded Odejo village with helicopters hovering in the air and shot indiscriminately, while those on the ground surrounded the community with sophisticated weapons and shouted at the residents to remain motionless wherever they were.

He said the air force men suddenly started entering residents' houses and breaking the doors in search of what the residents could not decipher.

Onehi stated, "In the course of carrying out their operation, they burnt down a house belonging to Otoh Okpachu and shot at one Ochejele Abu, who later died.

"They also arrested one Gawan Adikwu, whose whereabouts are still unknown. They claimed that they found bullets in Adikwu's room, but the man is a hunter, who keeps few cartridges for his hunting expedition and nothing more.

"They also wounded one Adigogo Oluma, who is in hospital now. The air force could not get any arms or ammunitions as being claimed by their men.

"We therefore call on the President, the Governor of Benue State, Dr Samuel Ortom, and other law enforcement agencies to bring to justice the men of the Nigerian Air Force, who attacked Odejo village without any provocation by our community.

"We demand a public apology from the Chief of Air Staff, compensation as well as an undertaking from the air force that such a barbaric act will never happen again in our community."

The acting Director, Defence Media Operations, Brig. Gen. Bernard Onyeuko, had said a day after the operation in the community that personnel of the *Operation Whirl Stroke*, in conjunction with the NAF Special Forces and the 72 Battalion

troops, recovered large quantities of arms and ammunition from two communities in the Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

Onyeuko had said in a statement that the troops carried out a cordon and search operation in Odogoke and Odejo communities after a deadly clash.

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