

Nine die in Benue, Delta herders' attack, market levy tussle

John Charles and Ochei Matthew

Nine people reportedly lost their lives in Benue and Delta states to suspected herders attack and tussle over market levy.

In the Benue incident, about five persons were reportedly killed by suspected herdsmen who stormed some villages in Gwer We Local Government area of Benue State in the early hours of Friday.

However, some of the armed herdsmen were said to have escaped with gunshot wounds after troops Operation Whirl Stroke trailed them to the Benue-Nasarawa border and engaged them in a gun duel.

According to locals, the armed herdsmen first invaded Ahume Village along Makurdi/Naka Road and dislodged by the troops who stationed at the village to ward off possible attack by the invaders.

One of the locals who identified himself as Aver said while the troops were patrolling Ahume community, the herdsmen invaded Tse-Nyar village and started shooting indiscriminately, killing five people and injuring others including a pregnant woman.

It was learned that the five dead bodies were recovered by security agencies, while three others including a pregnant woman were rescued alive with severe gunshot injuries even as many were said still be missing.

The local added that the dead bodies had been evacuated and the injured taken to hospital for treatment.

Aver said, "Last night there was a distress call that herdsmen attacked Ahume village along Makurdi-Naka road. As troops stationed in Kula village were alerted, the bandits ran to another village Tse Nyar where they killed three people.

"Many others were injured. The soldiers followed and met the bandits at the river bank on the border between Benue and Nasarawa states where they exchanged fire with them. They however crossed the river and escaped into Nasarawa State."

On Tuesday, suspected herdsmen invaded the Abagana IDP camp on the outskirts of Makurdi, killing seven people and injuring nine others.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Catherine Anene, said she had yet to receive the report.

Also, in Delta State, four persons died during an alleged lingering market tussle between Iwhrel and Ekiugbo communities in the Ughelli North local government area of Delta State.

City Round gathered that the victims were three males and a female whose identity could not be immediately ascertained as at press time.

It was also gathered that two of the deceased were shot and their corpses dumped at the entrance to one of the communities, the female victim was shot at the front of her store and later died at the hospital, while the last victim was killed on Thursday midnight.

A source in one of the communities said there was an issue between both communities concerning levy collection from traders and they agreed that nobody should collect levy from any trader until the issue were addressed.

The state acting police spokesperson, DSP Brig Edafe, had yet to pick calls made to his mobile as of the time of filing this report. But the Executive Chairman of Ughelli North Local Government Area, Mr Godwin Adode, on Friday ordered the total closure of the Ughelli main market until further notice.