

news

25 killed in fresh Benue attacks, gov calls for self-defence

John Charles, Makurdi

MARAUDING herdsmen invaded several communities in three local government areas of Benue State on Monday night and killed 25 people, including a traditional ruler.

The armed herdsmen were said to have invaded Tse-Sumaka village in the Mbadwem Council Ward of Guma Local Government Area, killing nine people and injuring one.

A traditional ruler was reportedly killed in Gaambehev, while many others were critically injured and several houses burnt at Avalumun Ioraav in Turan Council Ward of Logo LG.

At Tiortyu community in Tarka LG, another 15 people were murdered by the marauding herdsmen.

The state governor, Samuel Ortom; and his predecessor, Gabriel Suswam, hail from Guma and Logo Local Government Areas respectively, and the two council areas have been constant targets of attack by herdsmen since 2018.

The Minister of Special Duties and Intergovernmental Affairs and one time governor of the state, Senator George Akume, hails from Tarka LG.

The marauding herdsmen allegedly invaded the communities simultaneously.

The killing in Tarka LG triggered protest by youths who displayed bodies of the victims along the Makurdi/Gboko Federal Highway in the early hours of Tuesday.

The protest disrupted vehicular movement for hours.

Confirming the attacks, the state governor's Security Adviser, Lt Col Paul Hembra (ret'd.), said they were carried out simultaneously in the three local government areas, adding that more corpses might still be recovered.

Hembra said, "Yes, those incidents actually happened in Guma, Logo and Tarka. So far, nine corpses have been recovered from Guma.

"In Tarka where I am just coming from with the Commissioner of Police, 15 corpses were recovered, but we strongly suspect that more corpses may be recovered from bushes.

"We are arranging to patrol the bushes because certain persons have not been seen. It is also believed that the attackers left with some persons alive.

"In Logo, the same thing happened and a traditional ruler was murdered, but now that I am back, I will get back to my contacts to see if the figure has risen from the one I got last night."

The security adviser, however, said killings were carried out by suspected herdsmen, happening about the same time in all the

locations.

"Those who were injured and those who escaped the attack confirmed the attackers were herdsmen," he stated.

When contacted, the state police command's spokesman, Catherine Anene, said she had gone to one of the scenes of the incident.

"I am currently at the scene of the incident with the police commissioner. I will communicate you soon," Anene said.

Reacting to the killings, the state governor, Samuel Ortom, on Tuesday, said

the incessant killings of the people of the state by suspected herdsmen had turned him and the people into endangered species.

Ortom, in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Nathaniel Ikyur, and made available to journalists in Makurdi, directed his people to rise up to defend themselves forthwith.

He stated, "It is becoming increasingly glaring everyday that my people are now endangered species and so we can no longer wait for help. My people will have

to rise to the occasion to defend themselves and their heritage against the Fulani army of occupation.

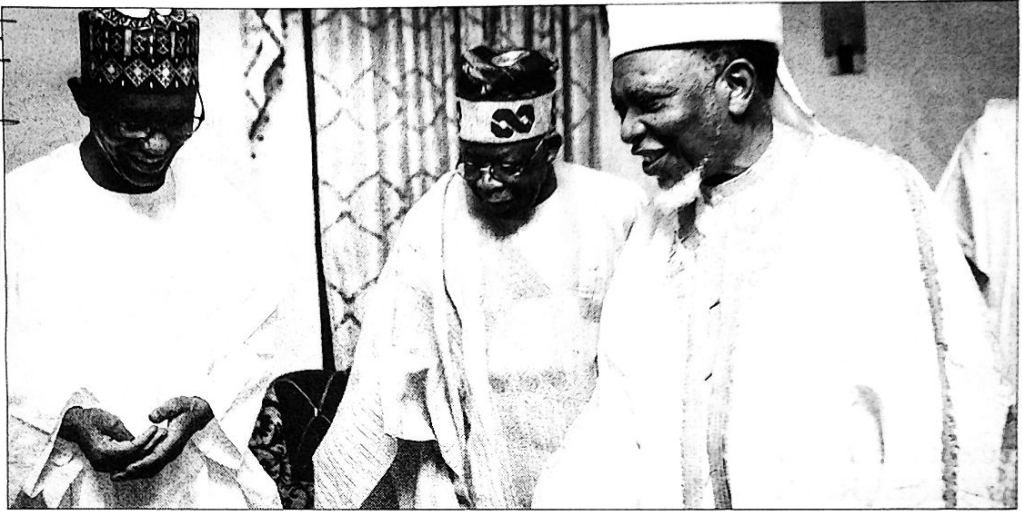
"We are law-abiding citizens. We have cried for help against these invaders but nothing is forthcoming. We are left alone and it looks like it is a deliberate strategy. Now, we have only one option; to defend ourselves or be extinct. This is a case for our survival.

"We have been accommodating other people in our land, but our hospitality is misconstrued as weakness. We are not a

conquered people. We will never be. We are free-born citizens of Nigeria."

Ortom, however, enjoined security operatives to do more in crime prevention and the protection of lives and property in the state, just as he urged the people to cooperate with security agencies to flush out the undesirable elements in the society.

The governor added that the state government would not shy away from its commitment to provide welfare and the security for its citizens.



•L-R: A former Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Nuhu Ribadu; All Progressives Congress National Leader, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu; and Sheikh Muhammad Jingir, when Tinubu paid the cleric a condolence visit over the death of his brother in Jos... on Tuesday. Photo: Tinubu Media Unit

Isoko youths ask oil firms to shut down operations

Dele Ogunyemi, Warri

MEMBERS of a host community in Isoko land of Delta State have given a 14-day ultimatum to oil companies operating in the community to peacefully shutdown operations and begin to address their demands with immediate effect.

The youth group of the community, under the aegis of the United Coalition Front Emancipation Movement, who felt marginalised, said if the oil companies failed to accede to their requests, they would launch attacks on their installations in Isoko land.

This was contained in a statement issued by the group and signed by its spokesman, Mr Ogbu Ogbu, which was

made available to journalists in Warri on Tuesday.

The group had last month threatened to launch coordinated attacks on oil and gas flow stations, pipelines, trunk line and other equipment if the companies refused to heed to their demands which included the engagement of Isoko youths into the onshore and offshore platforms of the oil companies.

Other demands included the promotion of the few Isoko sons and daughters working with the companies into management positions, as well as intensive training of the people on various skills acquisition programmes.

The group also called for the establishment of an Isoko Ethnic Nationality Regional Development Commission,

for the fast and efficient human capacity development of Isoko youths.

The statement from the aggrieved youths read in part, "We want the operators of OML 61, 30, 26 and 28 to peacefully shutdown operations in Isoko land, while our grievances are attended to in a round table discussion.

"The Nigerian Petroleum Development Company, Nigeria Agip Oil Company, Heritage Energy, Shell Petroleum Development Company and First Hydro should peacefully shutdown their operations in Isoko and comply with our demands.

"Oil and gas multinational companies and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation operating in Isoko land should heed

to our warning and advice for a peaceful shutdown of operations till further notice.

"UCFEM will not be blamed for any action taken for the protection of her existence as a people and for the defence of Isoko land.

"To this end, a 14-day ultimatum has been issued against the oil companies to comply with the peaceful shutdown of oil and gas operations in Isoko and the ultimatum comes into effect from April 11 till April 24, 2022."

Meanwhile, the Community Relations Officer of Heritage Energy, Mr Williams, stated, "We are not allowed to discuss issues like this with the press. We have our media consultant based in Lagos State who handles issues like this."

FG declares Friday, Monday public holidays for Easter

Solomon Odeniyi, Dennis Naku and Adeyinka Adedipe

THE Federal Government has declared Friday, April 15 and Monday, April 18 public holidays to mark this year's Easter celebrations.

The Minister of Interior, Rauf Aregbesola, announced this on Tuesday in a statement by the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Dr Shuaib Belgore.

While urging Christians to emulate the attributes of sacrifice, togetherness, forgiveness, kindness, love,

peace and patience, as exemplified by Jesus Christ's ministry on earth, the minister also asked them to pray for an end to the insecurity bedevilling the country.

He assured all that the Federal Government would leave no stone unturned to ensure that the recent attacks by undesirable elements on the highways, airport and the railway are timely brought to an end.

The statement read in part, "Security is everybody's business. I therefore urge Nigerians and foreigners

resident in our country to display a high sense of citizenship and public spiritedness at this critical time in the history of our country by supporting the efforts of all security agencies in bringing peace and security of lives and property of the citizenry.

"While wishing Christians at home and in the Diaspora a happy and peaceful Easter celebration, we also call on Nigerians to join hands with President Muhammadu Buhari in its determination to bring sustainable

development and usher in prosperity for all."

Ahead of the Easter holiday, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps said it has deployed 1,558 personnel to ensure adequate security of lives and property in Rivers State.

The NSCDC state command's spokesman, Olufemi Ayodele, disclosed this in a statement issued in Port Harcourt.

Ayodele said the tactical forces were drafted to the 23 local government areas of the state.