

## Killer herdsmen raid Benue community, kill policeman, 45 others

**Armed herdsmen continue attacks on Benue State with the latest incidents claiming 46 lives JOHN CHARLES and SEGUN ADEWOLE report**

**F**ORTY-SIX persons were reportedly killed on Wednesday as suspected armed herders unleashed a deadly attack on the Umogidi community of Entekpa Adoka district in the Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

The fresh attack came a day after suspected herders invaded the community and killed three persons on Tuesday.

On Monday, the Igboi community in the neighbouring Apa Local Government Area of the state was also attacked, with three persons killed.

It was gathered that the armed herders returned to the Umogidi community on Wednesday evening, shortly after the burial of the three persons earlier killed in the Tuesday attack.

The Special Adviser to Governor Samuel Ortom on Security, Lt. Col. Paul Hemba (retd.), while speaking to journalists on the phone, described the incident as "very tragic and painful."

He said, "I can confirm to you that there was an attack in Umogidi and as of this morning, the causality figure, from those who were seen physically from what I was told, was 46. But the figure may be higher because some people are still reported missing."

Also, confirming the attack, the Chairman of Otukpo Local Government Area, Bako Eje, on Thursday, said, "You know that these herders killed three people on Tuesday and they (herders) came back on Wednesday at about 4.15 pm and killed 46 people, including my own son, who was 32 years old. We just buried him and some other persons are still missing."

"Among the people killed were my immediate younger sister's husband, and her second son who was almost 38 years old."

Narrating the attack, a resident of the community, who identified himself as Sunny, said, "We were still mourning the death of the three people killed on Tuesday by these herders when we started hearing gunshots from different angles leading to the death of several people."

The spokesperson for the state police command, Catherine Anene, confirmed the recovery of eight corpses.

"Attack on Umogidi community is confirmed. Eight corpses have been recovered, including a police officer. More police teams have been deployed to the area to forestall further breakdown of law and order," Anene said.

Meanwhile, no fewer than 60 people have been reportedly killed across some villages in the state in the past month.

A media platform, Christian News, claimed that the deceased victims were Christians, although, The PUNCH could not verify the claim by the news platform.

The latest attack was the killing of seven people in the Ikobi and Apa communities on Saturday, April 1.

Assailants were said to have killed a Christian in an attack on a worship meeting at night in Ikobi.

Earlier that day, several houses were said to have been razed, while more than six Christians were killed by the attackers.

"Christian villages in Apa Local Government Area are under attack. Many Christians have been displaced by armed herdsmen. These attacks have forced Christians to abandon their farms. There has been no government intervention in order to stem these attacks."

In Benue state's Logo County on Saturday night, Fulani herdsmen invaded a church service at about 9 p.m., killed one Christian, wounded five others and kidnapped the pastor and four other congregation members, sources said.

On March 26 in Guma Local Government Area, five persons were killed in Fulani herdsmen attacks on the predominantly Christian villages of Njee and Chongu, after Udei village was attacked on March 23, said area resident James Anyamnhu.

"Five Christians were killed in these attacks. Three of the victims were Christian women, while two of them were men. The victims are farmers," Anyamnhu was quoted by



• Ortom

the news platform.

Also in the Agatu and Otukpo communities, five Christians were killed in an attack on March 23 in Atakpa, Agatu, Iwili, and Otukpo communities, a council official in the Agatu Local Government Area, Joseph Ngbede, disclosed. He also added that Guma County was also attacked.

Also On March 13, more than 50 Christians were killed in the Kwande community, some of the community leaders disclosed in a statement.

"We write to report recent, sustained terror attacks on our communities over the past 10 days which have resulted in over 50 people dead, several injured, thousands displaced and loss of property and farmlands," stated Festus Iorkyaa, Eric Tyohemba Udu and Solomon Terfa Jijah of the Turan Development Association (TUDA).

The killings and destruction of properties occur on a daily basis, they said.

"In some cases, the herdsmen have taken over the lands

and settled on them," they stated. "They come in good numbers with their cattle, destroying farm produce for their animals to graze, chase away the Christian inhabitants of such areas and pitch their tents there."

They identified some of the Christians killed as Abande Njor, Iornun Sonter, Abraham Terna, Aker Shagba Achuna, Kendon Tyover, Ornguga Tyodoo, Ajoh Iorhemba, Orshio Msughter, Abe Nyam, Aker Ushahembas, Ayagwa Lunen, Apav Terhile, Jirbee Amaku, Aza Bem, Ahil Wende, Iornumbes Ashi Shimave, Terhemba Madom, Andyar Aemberga, Kundu Igba, Tarkper Adomko, Jirbee Amaku, Terlumun Swen, Terna Udam, Atighir Aondokula, Terfa Mbagbar, Terver Mbagbar, Terzungwe Chagh, Tyoazua Aondona, Kogh Aondowase, Akura Utoo, Iortsor Shaapera, Awuhe Terhemmen, Lase Mbanengen, Kuku Terngu, Kuku Mzehenmen and Hangeuir Iorwuese Kuta.

The Executive Secretary of the state Emergency and Management Agency, Dr Emmanuel Shior had on March 13 said that 5,138 people were killed by suspected herdsmen under Governor Samuel Ortom's administration.

The SEMA boss while addressing journalists on the humanitarian situation in the state since the assumption of office of Ortom led administration about eight years, said in all, 18 of the 23 local government areas of the state were attacked by suspected armed herdsmen.

Shior who gave the breakdown of deaths recorded since the assumption of office of Governor Ortom in 2015 hinted that the figures were the ones recorded.

According to him, in 2015, 1,177 deaths were recorded, in 2016, 809, deaths, 2017, 43 deaths were recorded, in 2018, 440 people were recorded killed.

He further said that the state recorded 174 deaths in 2019, and 88 in 2020 while a colossal death of 2,131 deaths was recorded in 2021, 172 deaths were recorded in 2022 and from January 2023 till date, 104 deaths have been recorded.

"So, in all the total of death since 2015 till date is 5,138", Shior said.

The SEMA boss regretted that there had been renewed attacks in some local government areas of the state shortly after the presidential and national assembly elections.

Shior said, "There was more influx of herdsmen since the presidential election because Ortom lost his senatorial election."

The SEMA boss said that the incessant attacks from the previous government informed the Ortom administration to enact the anti-open grazing law but regretted that both the Federal Government and security agencies who should have supported the state government to enforce to the law have refused to do so.

"The state government also came out with livestock guards and Community Volunteers Guards to ensure the protection of lives and property, with all these measures, there is no end in sight," he said.

While decrying the attitude of the President, Major General Muhammad Buhari (retd.), regime towards the plights of Benue people in the hands of armed herdsmen, Shior appealed to the incoming president to work towards ending the insecurity in the state.

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