

Soldiers wade in as two die in Plateau farmer-herder clash

18th January 2024



By James Abraham

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A farmer and a herder were killed on Wednesday in the Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State.

It was learnt that the farmer was attacked and killed on his farm in the Gada Biu-Mbar community while the herder was killed in the Butara Kampany community of the council area.

A community leader in the Bokkos LGA and Chairman, Community Peace Observers in the council area, Kefas Mallai, confirmed the killing to *The PUNCH* in Jos on Wednesday.

Mallai, who attributed the killings to prevailing mutual suspicion between the natives and herders following the Christmas Eve attacks which claimed over 150 lives, said, “Just this morning on Wednesday, one native farmer was killed along Gada-Biu-Mbar community and one Fulani was also killed at Butara Kampany area.

“In the Gada Biu-Mbar incident, the native farmer was on his farm to irrigate his Irish potatoes. Suddenly, some Fulani herders led their cows into his farm and he drove the cows away. Shortly after that, armed Fulani herders invaded the farm and killed the native farmer and that created tension in the area.

“Then, as Fulani herders were seen in a vehicle at Butara Kampany community, some vigilant natives tried to stop the car to search them but the Fulani occupants jumped out of the vehicle and started running away. In the process, one of the herders was killed also. There was also an exchange of fire between them.”

The community leader, however, said the timely arrival of soldiers saved the situation from degenerating.

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“The situation is calm now. The soldiers were contacted and they arrived immediately which saved the situation,” he stated.

The community leader, who decried the mutual suspicion between herders and farmers in the council area, urged the government to intervene in the situation with a view to addressing the challenge.

“Our problem now in Bokokos is the existence of mutual suspicion between herders and the natives especially after the Christmas Eve attacks which claimed over 150 lives. On several occasions, we have called a meeting of the two groups to meet for peacebuilding. But the suspicion is so high to the extent that none of the groups has agreed on any suggested location. As I talk to you now, we are still searching for common ground because we cannot continue to kill one another,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police in Plateau State, Okoro Alawari, assured residents that the command, under his watch, was doing everything within its power to ensure the safety of their lives and property.

According to the command’s spokesman, Alabo Alfred, the Commissioner of Police spoke when the National Chairman of the Police Community Relations Committee, Alhaji Mogaji Olaniya, paid a working visit to the Plateau State Police Command on Wednesday.

He urged the people to cooperate with the police and other security agencies to tackle the security challenge in the state.