

Scores killed as bandits sack nine Benue communities

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| By John Charles

Bandits have descended on about nine communities in the Apa Local Government Area of Benue State, killing and setting houses on fire.

It was gathered that the communities have become deserted as residents, who survived the attack, which began a few days ago, have fled for dear life.

While some locals gave the casualty figure as 25 the lawmaker representing the area in the state Assembly, Abu Umoru, said he had lost count of the casualties.

According to the lawmaker, about 95 per cent of communities in the local government have become desolate following the constant attacks.

The lawmaker said, "About 95 per cent of a section of my community is displaced and I can mention them.

"The entire Edikpo community has been displaced, the entire Opaha, where I come from, nobody in is that community; Odugbo, nobody is there; Akpete, Ikobi, Akpata, Idiaha, Ochumekwu, Adiga nobody is in those communities.

"Every day they will be burning houses in Akpete. As I speak to you, for three consecutive days, they have been going to Akpete and burning houses after chasing them out of their ancestral homes.

"They have been laying ambush, killing people, one, two three to five persons on a daily basis.

"Right now I don't know the number of casualties. It's so many."

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Umoru, who lamented that the situation had gone beyond the communities, said he had come down with an illness over the crisis.

He said, "I have gone to my communities to sympathise with my people and because of the killings I have developed a problem that I have to go to the hospital for a checkup.

“The killings are terrible. Even yesterday (Wednesday), on the highway around Nasarawa Toto leading to Oweto up to Otukpo, between a village called Ojantele and Orozo, Fulani put their cows on the road for three hours, no movement that the Hausa people who travel on these big trucks came down and were talking to them because they barricaded the road.

“These killings have gone beyond us. Our representatives at the National Assembly have moved motions times without numbers but what has happened? Who do we cry to? We need to cry to God.

“It’s a pathetic situation. I don’t know what to do; I’m speechless. Sometimes I ask myself: ‘Why should I contest (for election)?’ I can’t go with my personal resources to go and do anything anywhere.

“If people are not happy or settled how do you impact their lives? How many people can you feed? If they are in their villages, it’s very easy for you to reach them, but if they are not there, how can you take a solar system there?

“The other time, some people who were working in the higher institution, they ambushed them on the road, opened fire and killed two of them.”

When contacted, the spokesperson for the Benue State Police Command, Catherine Anene, said, “No please, I don’t have reports on these attacks.”

Attempts to get the reaction of the state government failed as Governor Hyacinth Alia’s Special Adviser on Security, Joseph Har, did not pick up his calls.