

Gov fumes as 50 villagers killed in Benue mass murder

John Charles, Makurdi

Casualty figure in the renewed killing in Ayati community in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State has risen to 50, including two policemen, as more corpses have been recovered.

The State Governor, Rev Fr Hyacinth Alia who condemned the renewed killing lamented that the attack was coming despite strong security presence in the area.

The governor lamented that killing still continued in the council despite strong security presence and the regular dialogue sessions his administration had been holding with Stakeholders, and traditional rulers seeking the return of peace in Sankera.

In a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Kula Tersoo, and made available to journalists in Makurdi, the governor described the attack as "another unprovoked attack on Ayati settlement in Ukum Local Government Area where several people were reportedly killed.

"Governor Alia strongly condemns the attack on unarmed innocent citizens of Benue State by armed bandits, expressing worry that such heinous act has continued in the state despite strong security presence."

Alia, who vowed to continue to use lawful procedures to protect Benue people, particularly Ukum residents, called on security personnel to improve their surveillance and ensure that vulnerable communities were not left unguarded.

He explained that the

government was awaiting a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to bring out its findings.

"He consoles families that lost their loved ones in the attack, saying his thoughts of comfort and prayers are with them and with the entire people of Ukum Local Government.

Ukum is one of the three local government areas (others are Katsina Ala and Logo LGs) that make up of Sankera axis where criminality holds sway.

In recent times, Ukum and Katsina-Ala have been turned to epicenter of bloodbath.

On July 3, 2024, the state government declared curfew on troubled Ukum LG as youths engaged in violent protest that led to destruction of personal and government property worth hundreds of millions of naira.

The violent protest was as a result of killing of 11 people by local bandits in Ayati community.

Few days after, precisely, July 19 local bandits defied curfew and unleashed terror on Mbachier council ward in Katsina-Ala LGA killing 18 people.

Meanwhile, the state Police Command has said that only 15 people were killed in the renewed bandits attack on Ayati community.

According to the statement issued by the spokesperson for the state command, Catherine Anene, the bandits at about 1630hrs while normal daily activities were going on in Ayati village, Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State, a large number of armed bandits invaded the village and started shooting sporadically at members of the community.

"Police officers within the community responded immediately and were able to repel the bandits. However, 15 people had already sustained gunshot injuries from the attack and were confirmed dead on arrival at the hospital.

"The unfortunate incident also claimed the lives of two police officers who were among the team that responded to the distress call. Corpses have been deposited at General Hospital Ukum and investigation is ongoing."

Police quiz Tonto Dikeh over

Solomon Odeniyi

The Nigeria Police Force has invited Nollywood actress Tonto Dikeh to its headquarters in connection with an investigation into criminal defamation, cyberbullying, and forgery, among others.

The invitation was issued by the Inspector General of Police Monitoring Unit, which is handling the case.

In the invitation letter signed by the Head of the IGP Monitoring Unit, DCP A.A. Elleman, and obtained by our correspondent, it was stated that the actress's name prominently appeared in the investigation the unit was conducting.

The letter dated August 5 read, "This office is investigating a case of Criminal Defamation, Forgery, Falsehood, Cyberbullying and Criminal