

Policeman, eight civilians killed in fresh Benue attack

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File photo: Masked gunmen

| By John Charles

Suspected armed herders have killed nine people, including a police officer, in renewed attacks on some communities in the Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

The incident, according to some indigenes of the communities, started last Friday and lasted till Tuesday.

One of the residents of Agatu, who simply identified himself as Odenyi, told our correspondent that the suspected armed herders who always come from Kogi State to launch attacks and run back.

Some communities attacked included Okwutanobe, Okpokpolo, Olegagbani and Ikpele.

Odenyi said, “The attacks started last Friday at Okwutanobe, where two people were killed. On Saturday, they attacked Okpokpolo and killed one person.

“On Monday, the armed herders invaded Olegagbani, where they killed one person, and today (Tuesday), the same armed herders attacked Ikpele, where they killed one police officer and four people.

The attacks are coming barely two days after the state leadership of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Benue State chapter, raised the alarm over the persistent rustling of about 340 cattle in July.

The secretary of the association, Ibrahim Galma, had accused criminals in Agatu LGA of rustling their cattle.

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When contacted, the Chairman of Agatu LGA, James Melvin, confirmed that nine people, including a police officer, were killed in the past three days in some communities in the council.

The chairman said, “It’s true. I can confirm to you that four people were killed in Okwutanobe, Okpokpolo and Olegugbani, while five people, including a police officer, were killed in Ikpele today.

The chairman suspected that killings may be a reprisal for the alleged rustling of their cattle by criminals.

‘We totally condemn these attacks and think it was a reprisal for their earlier report of cattle rustling in Agatu communities.

He added, “We are appealing to them to give the government time to investigate the alleged rustling instead of taking the law into their own hands.”

The council chairman, who applauded security operatives in the council, said that the terrain within the council is posing serious challenges to them.