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Gunmen kill 19, abduct 17 in Benue

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BY FROM ROSE EJEMBI, MAKURDI. ON MARCH 30, 2014 ·

COVER

No fewer than 19 persons among them women and children were yesterday killed by gunmen while 17 others were abducted in different villages of Agatu Local Government Area in Benue State.

Agatu Chairman, Hon. Stephen Dutse told newsmen in Makurdi yesterday that the attackers stormed, Olegaje, Ogumogbo, Ejuma and Ogbagaji, headquarters of the local government about 10pm in a guerrilla manner and started shooting sporadically making the people to run for dear life.

Commenting on the incident, Commissioner of Works, Mr. John Ngbede and the lawmaker representing the area at the State House of Assembly, Sule Audu both lamented the absence of security operatives during the attacks in the affected communities.

They appealed to the security agencies in the state to deploy their personnel in the affected villages and surrounding communities so that such incidence could be prevented in future.

When contacted, Police Public Relations Officer in the state, SP Daniel Ezeala said the command was yet to be briefed on the latest incident.

In another development, Association of Local Government of Nigeria, (ALGON), Benue State chapter yesterday called on state and federal government to initiate a Civilian Joint Task Force to support local communities in the state to maintain peace and wade off the Fulani invaders.

The ALGON chairman, Hon. Terna Kester Kyenge who led other members to brief newsmen at the NUJ House in Makurdi, said that more efforts should be made to strengthen security infrastructure in the state with greater emphasis on local policing and neighbourhood watch.

"Instead of relying more on conventional style of government security apparatus, the down-up, people-

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based approach from ward, local, state and federal levels should be emphasized," he added.

He suggested that the JTF must be designed in the context of the joint Fulani/Hausa, Tiv/Idoma ethno-religious summit to enhance dialogue to resolve the on-going crises.

The chairman lamented that despite Governor Suswam's high profile security credentials, over eight local governments in Benue, including Guma, Gwer West, Gwer East, Apa, Agatu, Logo, Katsina Ala, Kwande among other areas have already been engulfed in the crisis.

He further regretted the suspected use of chemical weapons on Benue natives especially in Gwer West and Guma Local Government Area where 12 persons were discovered dead without gun wounds or machete cuts on their bodies.

Kyenge posited that the situation has raised a lot of concern as investigation is on-going to determine whether their death was caused by chemical use or otherwise.

He lamented that Nigerian borders are porous as a result of which dangerous material are being smuggled into the country, urging that the federal government should intensify security patrol at the borders to check the situation.

On their part, the AIGON chairman pledged to provide food and other essentials to the displaced persons and called on public-spirited individuals to also come to the aid of the refugees.

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