

Southern Kaduna killings: Death toll rises to 45

From **Sola Ojo**, Kaduna

THE number of deaths from five villages attacked by alleged armed herdsmen in Kauru Local Government Area, local government area of Kaduna State, last Sunday, has risen to 45.

Kaduna State Police Command said, yesterday, it could not ascertain the number of casualties, as at press time.

This was even as Governor Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai condemned the killings but said peace efforts are ongoing to address the issue.

Killings in Southern Kaduna had hitherto been limited to Jema'a and Sanga local government areas but has now been extended to Kauru local government.

Eyewitnesses said renewed disagreement between a farmer and a Fulani man, who asked to settle with his cattle in his farmland, reportedly caused the new bloodbath. This came few hours after a peace meeting by the state government in Samaru Kataf, about 50 minutes drive from latest affected villages.

The affected villages are: Kigam; Kitakum; Unguwan Magaji; Unguwan Rimi and Kizipi, all in Chawai Chiefdom, in Kauru LGA, about 300 kilometres east of Kaduna metropolis. Sources in the villages said that they recovered and buried 43 bodies, mainly women and children around 3:00pm on Monday, while two others were recovered yesterday. "Last September, a Fulani man called Haruna approached a farmer here in Unguwan Magaji and asked that he wanted to settle with his cattle on portion of farmland the farmer had cleared. The farmer said he would not give out the farm because he had cleared it preparatory for yam farming by October. Nonetheless, Haruna moved in with his cattle and built straw huts on the farm where he slept. When the case was taken to the police station in Kamuru Ikulu and Haruna was invited, he came and became violent, beat up people with his herdsmen stick. The police detained and later released him.

"So, last Sunday, around 3:00pm, they invaded our villages, burnt 65 houses and all our foodstuff. We have buried 43 and we will bury two tomorrow," an elderly man in the area said.

However, Simon Arabo, member representing Kauru/Lere Federal Constituency, was the first government official to visit the place, according to a village source.

"It was after his arrival that we were able to search the whole bushes to recover some corpses. He came with five truck of policemen. He also gave us some cash to buy what we could use to feed for the meantime.

Meanwhile, el-Rufai's aide on Media and publicity, Samuel Aruwan described the killings as "barbaric conduct by people who are opposed to peaceful and harmonious living by communities..."

5 deputy governors reject doomsday prophecy

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