

Herdsman: Tension, fear grip Delta communities

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TWO years ago in communities within Abraka, a university town in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State, came chilling tales of how marauding herdsman armed with sophisticated firearms pierced the hearts of families.

They killed and maimed crop farmers, and rape the female folks. The torments meted on the locals by the marauding gangs in the moulds of herdsman became ever increasing, as they go about it unrestrained.

In Ovre-Oruarivie, one of the agrarian communities, the band of killers established a camp from where they plan and execute their attacks on innocent residents and farmers. The thick forest

where the camp is located was said to have been forcefully taken over by the herdsman.

Sources claim that about 3,000 herdsman were operating from the camp from where they also take over 10,000 cows for grazing expedition to destroy crops of farmers. The Ovre-Oruarivie, according to locals, is a dreaded place that even security forces do not tread.

Just as it was two years ago, the tales from the Abraka communities have not changed. The killings, maiming and raping of women are ever constant.

At the last count, over 12 people have been killed by herdsman in the last two years with several maimed while scores of women, some, grannies as old as 65, violated by the lords of the bush.

The locals are helpless as anarchy has been let loose in the hitherto quiet

community. Going into the wood is now like a death march into the notorious Sambisa forest as one may be shot dead, knifed or raped by the herdsman with fire in their eyes.

Mrs. Patience Akpomimie, widow and subsistence farmer recalled how her husband was murdered on February 21 by herdsman.

On the fateful day, the mother of five had gone to the family smallholding with the husband and three children to harvest cassava. As work progressed, she saw gun wielding men. She tried to scream but words could not come out. Confused, the husband calmly whispered to her to run away fast with the children.

She ran to the children and ordered them to fly as fast as their legs could carry them.

But then, the enemies caught up with her and demanded to know what the husband told her, of which she replied "nothing" and dashed away. What she heard next was thunderous shots fired by the gunmen in anger.

Even when some hit her on the thigh and back, she did not slow down. She had heard stories of the herdsman who take happiness in violating and killing women. She fled to the nearest house and fearfully told her ordeal, as she bled from her nose and other parts of her body.

The kindhearted neighbour took the bleeding woman in and immediately ferried her to a local hospital, from she was taken to the Delta State University