

16 killed in Taraba/Benue ethnic clashes

• 12 villages burnt in Takum

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Sylvanus Viashima, Jalingo and Rose Ejembi, Makurdi

At least seven persons were reportedly killed and 11 villages burnt in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State in the raging Jukun-Tiv crisis in the southern zone of the state.

The latest attack on Ikyergba village, near Takum, on Saturday evening, happened while Governor Darius Ishaku was holding a meeting with Tiv stakeholders at the Exco Chambers of Taraba Government House, Jalingo.

A witness, James Akirga, told our correspondent yesterday that Jukun militia in their numbers attacked the village at about 3pm, killing seven people and setting the entire village ablaze.

“We were at home when, suddenly, we started hearing gunshots from different directions. Some of us managed to escape, but the attackers killed seven people and set the entire village of about 45 houses ablaze. This is the fifth time in less than a week that Jukun militia are attacking our villages.

“Some of the attackers were dressed in military uniform, while others were in plain clothes. When they were done with the damage and were retreating, I sighted a military Hilux van from where I was hiding. The van was driven out from the village. I was not really close to it so I couldn’t see the registration number of the vehicle or identify its occupants,” he said.

Akirga named other villages burnt within two weeks in the area to include, Tse-Ajayi, Akenawe, Tortsee, Mhambe, Agoor, NKST Jato, Imande-Ade, Lijam, Akesa, Tse-Yange and Kasuan Haske.

The Taraba State police public relations officer, DSP. David Misal, said he was not aware of any attack in the area: “I am yet to be communicated regarding any attack in Takum LGA. For now, I am not aware of any attack and nobody has communicated such information to me.”

Takum, the hometown of Governor Darius Ishaku and retired Gen. T.Y. Danjuma, former Chief of Army Staff, has experienced a number of attacks in recent times, following the killing of a Jukun farmer by suspected Tiv youths.

Meanwhile, the Tiv socio-cultural organisation, Mdzough U Tiv, has expressed concern over the Tiv-Jukun conflict, which initially started in Abintse, Guma LGA to Ukum ,all in Benue State and has spread to Taraba State.

In a statement jointly signed by president-general, Mdzough U Tiv, Edward Ujege, and secretary-general, Dr. Boniface Ukende, the organisation described the conflict as unnecessary, uncalled for and a disgrace to the longstanding cordial relationship between the two ethnic groups who have lived peacefully together in the past as brothers and sisters.

In another development, the Benue State Police Command has confirmed that nine persons were killed by gunmen in the three communities of Katisina-Ala LGA of the State .

According to the PPRO, DSP Catherine Anene, the killings occurred during another clash between Ikurav and Shitile ethnic groups in the LGA .Anene said that the Ikurav and Shitile have a history of attacks on each other on any slightest provocation .She said the police have been trying to settle the two communities ,adding that the cause of the clash remained a mystery .

“The attacks started at a funeral . Four people were killed and five others bodies were recovered in two other villages , making the number of casualties to nine.” Anene said the casualty figure would have been more, but for the quick intervention of the police.

Anene further explained that several meetings with the communities did not yield any positive result as they have not been able to state categorically the reason for the attacks.

She stated further that patrol teams have been detailed to continue to keep peace until there is a lasting solution to the incessant crisis.

“We are appealing to the people of Ikurav and Shitile to bring to an end this setback they have designed for themselves,” the PPRO stated.



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