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The black attire worn by the congregants foretold the mood of the solemn event at Agadama Secondary School in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State. Sad faces, sorrowful looks, hisses and sighs only accentuated the entire purpose of the gathering.

There were curses, too, by mostly elderly women who pointed to the ten caskets bearing the remains of 10 natives of Uwheru Kingdom. They were murdered during an invasion by arms wielding herdsmen who unleashed mayhem in the agrarian kingdom, leaving on its trail blood and tears.

To the embittered indigenes of Uwheru who rained curses, the perpetrators of the heinous act will never know peace for cutting short unfulfilled destinies and promises, as well as increasing the numbers of orphans, widows and widowers in the area.

Security agencies had doubted the death toll at the wake of the invasion in February, claiming that only one person was confirmed death, but they were stunned when the corpses were exhumed from shallow graves in the bushes.

Names of the victims were given as Dennis Itoje, Philip Emesharueke, Arhiakpore Steven, Oghenekparobo Emmanuel, Andrew Itiroghene Useh, Ochuko Ovwanre, Samson Coach Ogheneoruese, Kotor Boy, Abura Ejuweyere and Freeborn Isreal.

Their burial followed the conclusion of autopsy conducted at the Ughelli Central Hospital where it was affirmed that the victims were shot dead.

A truck conveyed the white caskets from the morgue at Ughelli Central Hospital at about 10:40am to Agadama amidst wailings by their kinsmen.

A brief Christian service was held in their honour before they were interred.

Nine of the caskets were lowered into the proper graves prepared few meters away from the school while one of the deceased who hailed from Ofoni, an Urhobo community in Bayelsa State, was taken home after the service for burial.

To underscore the importance of the solemn ceremony, a powerful delegation of the apex socio-cultural organisation of Urhobo nation, Urhobo Progress Union (UPU) was sent to witness the burial.

The delegation was led by the first deputy president-general, Capt. Anthony Onoharigho; second deputy president-general, Sir Francis Ifie; and national secretary, Chief Kenneth Iwhewhe.

Apart from raining curses on what they described as malicious invaders, the people berated the All Progressive Congress (APC) Federal Government of President Muhammadu Buhari and security agencies for treating herdsmen attacks in their communities with kid gloves.

Speaking at the burial ceremony, Delta State Commissioner for Higher Education, Prof. Patrick Muoboghare,

decried the killing of the victims by herdsmen, stating that their kinsmen can no longer go their farm lands owing to the herdsmen attacks.

According to him, the armed-wielding herdsmen who killed the deceased farmers were foreign Fulani herdsmen from Mali, Chad and other parts of Africa.

He urged the Federal Government to ensure that the herdsmen were evacuated from their communities to enable their farmers return to their farming businesses.

Also speaking during a visit to the graveside of the slain victims, national chairman of Urhobo Renaissance Society (URS), Prof. Hope Eghagha urged the Federal Government to quickly tame the spate of killings, rape and maiming by herdsmen in Uwheru Kingdom.

Eghagha who led the body of Urhobo renowned academia, businessmen and professional to also present relief materials to the survivors of the deadly invasions, lamented the undated attacks by foreign herdsmen believed to be from Chad, Mali, Niger and other African countries.

He said the lack of intervention of government and security agencies had emboldened the hoodlums in their criminal trade, assuring that URS was working with UPU to ensure that the killings of Urhobo indigenes by herdsmen is urgently addressed.

Eghagha, a Professor of English Language at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) said URS was touched by the gruesome killings, and condemned a situation where members of the communities who are predominantly farmers are now scared to visit their farms over fears of being killed, raped or attacked by herdsmen.

The former Commissioner for Higher Education in Delta State urged President Muhammadu Buhari to protect Urhobo people from further attacks and invasion by killer herdsmen, stressing that Urhobo Nation will not cede any portion of their land through any guise to foreigners or local invaders.

Eghagha called on the international community to intervene in the helpless situation of Uwheru Kingdom by directing the Nigerian government to ensure that Urhobo people are protected from herdsmen attacks.

He also appealed to heads of security agencies in the country to diligently investigate and prosecute its men who are alleged to have taken sides with the marauding herdsmen in the attacks against the people of Uwheru Kingdom.

According to him, “We are here to commiserate with our kith and kin who were attacked by strangers in their land, and during this last attacks ten people lost their lives. The President-General of the community spoke earlier on saying over 80 persons have lost their lives.

“Sometimes, their wives are raped and killed. You know what it means for your wife to be raped in your presence. People were slaughtered and burnt. This is unacceptable by any standard. By the laws of the land, you cannot bear arms except you are licensed. The people here are defenseless.

“So, we are calling on the Federal government to perform its duties and obligation to Urhobo people specifically towards the people of Uwheru Kingdom by ensuring that security forces protect them. I emphasize; protect them (Uwheru people). The narrative out there is that some of the security forces took sides with the invaders. That is very unfortunate.

“It is our view that such persons in our security forces who took sides against our people should be invited and interrogated. Where it is established that such murderers took sides against our people due sanctions should be invoked against them.”

Those on the entourage of the URS included renowned Professor of Law, Chief Joseph Abugu; Prof (Mrs.) Rose Aziza; Prof. Sunny Awhefeada; and Chief Joseph Okoro.