

By Sylvanus Vlashima, Jalingo

WHEN Talatu Yaro left her village home on July 18, 2022, she probably had no idea it was her last outing. She was murdered soon after. Her remains were mutilated and wrapped in a polythene bag as she journeyed to the world beyond.

That same day, Rimamsikwe Audu, another villager, was shredded at the same Kujwean village. Andemyaneto Adamu, a community leader, was also butchered on Takum-Lisam Road, by the same gang of armed herdsmen.

That is the sad, dark story that descended on Ussa and Takum local government areas. Yangtu Special Development Area is not left out. For months, these rural communities have been shattered by incessant attacks by herdsmen and abandoned by government.

No fewer than 300 victims were killed in different attacks. Over 40 villages were sacked while an estimated 100,000 persons were displaced from their ancestral homes.

Member representing Ussa Local Government Area at the State House of Assembly, Habila Timothy Anderifun, said: "These attacks started early in the year, intensified in the last two months. The attacks were marked by unprecedented brutality and inhuman cruelty."

"With deep pains in my heart and every sense of responsibility, I address you today over the unprovoked attacks and sustained killing of the people of Ussa and parts of Takum local government areas."

"For months now, the good people of Ussa in so many communities in Takum LG as well as Yangtu have come under coordinated and sustained attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen (bandits) who dislodged thousands of people from their ancestral communities and forced them into Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps."

Just on Thursday, July 22, 2022, Jenuwa Ny-nyie village was attacked and at least nine persons were killed. In the previous week, precisely from July 5 to 12, no fewer than 30 people were murdered.

This is aside the six soldiers including the CO of Ada Barracks Takum killed by suspected armed Fulani bandits in the area and others killed in the past. Equally worrisome is the brutal manner in which the terrorists killed and maimed their victims.

"It is imperative to state here that today, communities such as Kujwean, Asik, Ripenchin, kutuko, Kusansan and in fact, the entire Kwesati ward, Lisam II, Yangtu and Bilka among other communities have been deserted."

"Reports from these communities indicate that the deserted communities have been taken over by Fulani herdsmen who now graze freely on peoples' farms and homes."

"Today, the humanitarian situation occasioned by the attack and displacement of the over 120,000 persons is pathetic and needs urgent intervention. We call on the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the State Emergency Management Agency and other aid organisations and spirited individuals to intervene in the provision of shelter, protection, water, food and non-food relief items to address the growing humanitarian crisis confronting the IDPs."

"We are also calling on the state government to set up a high commission of enquiry to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the crisis with the view to finding lasting solutions to the conflict."

"This is very important because the Fulani and the Kuteb have been living peacefully together over the decades until the recent ugly development."

"This could be the 'hand of Esau but the voice of Jacob'."

"For now, we want the United Nations and the international community to turn their attention to the on going killings, which can be likened to genocide, in Ussa and parts of Takum, capable of wiping the entire people of Ussa out of the planet earth."

"The killings and mutilation of the bodies of the victims in Ussa constitutes crimes against humanity. We urge the Federal Government to take urgent steps to end these senseless killings expeditiously. It is the primary responsibility of government to protect the lives and property of her citizens anywhere in this country."

Sources told Daily Sun that the crisis sparked off few months ago when a Fulani herder killed a

Displaced persons taking refuge in an open field without shelter



Terror returns to Taraba

Fulani herdsmen attack Takum, Ussa communities, slaughter hundreds



Homes and barns destroyed

Kuteb man on his farm in Ussa. On hearing about this, the youth in the place mobilised and went on rampage, killing several cows and some Fulani.

Elders from both sides intervened and normalcy was returned for a few days, only for the attacks to resume unabated, the sources said.

A resident of the affected area, Ezekiel Ande, argued: "What is happening to Kuteb communities is not just about mere attacks because of misunderstanding between farmers and herdsmen. This is a deliberate ethnic cleansing. They want to wipe out the entire Kuteb nation and it seems there is nothing stopping them."

"The security agencies seemed to turn a blind eye even when these terrorists killed six of their men including the CO of Ada Barracks Takum. If it were somewhere else, soldiers would have descended on the people. But because it is killer herdsmen, the whole thing is swept under the carpet as if it is nothing."

"The crisis did not just start. Over five years ago, a member of the state House of Assembly, Hossah Ibi, was kidnapped and killed even after ransom was paid in millions. It has always been the plan of some people to eliminate the Kuteb people."



"The last Ukwe Takum, a first class ruler of Takum, died for almost three decades now. They have refused to allow a new one because a certain tribe wants to take over the throne. Of course, they know that if they try it whoever they appoint will die. The stool is by right occupied by the Kuteb people."

"These people decided to connive with the killer herdsmen who have been wanting to take over lands in the area to capitalise on the little misunderstanding perpetuate their evil agenda."

"That is why you see government has been quiet even though the state governor himself is from Takum where people are being killed almost on a daily basis."

Rimande Joseph, said: "Even when they kill someone with a bullet, they still cut him or her into pieces. It is not like they are doing it to go with some body parts or anything. They just butcher the remains into small pieces and leave them there for people to feed on the gory details. It is the height of inhumanity."

"It is sad to discover that there is virtually no security presence in the area. Even check points previously mounted are now deserted. It is a free

day for the killers. Nowhere is safe."

"The people are scampering for safety all over the place. Even Takum where most of our people now take refuge is not safe. We just hope that God will keep them."

In an open letter to Governor Darius Ishaku, who is currently holidaying abroad, a member of the House of Representatives, Usman Danjuma Shiddi, chided him for his absence while the state is boiling:

"The precarious situation in which our communities find themselves has made it necessary for me as a stakeholder, to take this route. I have constantly offered solutions but for reasons best known to you alone, you chose to ignore them."

"Unfortunately, Taraba Marshall, which is perhaps the only safety measure your administration had attempted to install to curb these terrorists' threats, has been grossly politicised and abused by your own administration."

"You are aware as the Chief Security Officer of our dear state that our people in Ussa LG and Yangtu Development Area have come under heavy attacks by suspected Boko Haram terrorists in the past three months. Those attacks and massacre are very clear footprints of Boko Haram for this was how it started in Borno and Yobe states."

"As I write sir, quite over 300 lives have been lost and more than 40 communities destroyed in Taraba State. Terrorists' camps are now spreading over these communities from where they launch attacks and annex further communities."

"Terrorists are now advancing towards your own local government, Takum. They have taken over Tati village and Manyan, about 20 minutes drive from your own town, yet you are the Chief Security Officer of our dear state."

"Sadly, you left this country while your state, Taraba, was in tethers and bleeding all over; but you have been abstractly touring the globe for about 30 days while part of the state is bleeding."

"As the number one citizen of our dear state, the call of duty beckoned on you as of necessity to have cut short your engagements abroad to come home in the interest of your people whose security and welfare, Section 14 (2) (b) of the Constitution has placed as your primary purpose."

"As the governor, you have much better latitude to leverage on by reaching out to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces for a presidential directive to secure our people. I hold the opinion that if nothing effective is done now, the entire state starting from our zone, will be taken over by Boko Haram terrorists."