

The Lifeline

Blood everywhere in Benue

• How 25 women, children, others were killed in Iye market • Over 300 killed in 2 months

From **Scholastica Onyeka,**
Makurdi

① **MONDAY**, May 21, 2023, will remain a red letter day for the people of Iye community in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State, where 18 people were killed in cold blood in an attack that took place on a market day by gunmen suspected to be herdsmen militia.

In this last attack, a middle aged woman had her hand cut off from the wrist while a two-year-old child she was carrying on her back was killed in cold blood. The attackers burnt down over 200 houses.

Our correspondent reports that the Iye market attack was one in the series of similar attacks by armed herdsmen who have waged a relentless war against the people of Benue State. On November 3, 2022, killer herdsmen invaded Ukohol market, along Makurdi-Lafia road, also in Guma LGA, and sprayed bullets on the traders, killing 18 persons among them women, children and the aged.

Iye village is located immediately after former University of Agriculture, Makurdi (FUAM), now Joseph Saawuan Tarka University, Makurdi (JOSTUM), and not up to 20 kilometres from Makurdi, the state capital.

Between April and May this year, more than 300 people have been killed in Benue State as a result of herdsmen's attacks just as the state needs help in form of food, water, shelter and medication to combat the mounting humanitarian crisis with over two million residents living in IDP camps.



• Burnt vehicle and motorcycle

The latest attack on Iye has spread fear and agony in the agrarian community as residents have fled their home for fear of further attacks.

② The attack which came barely 24 hours after herdsmen attacked and killed six people in Apa, Local Government Area while several others were injured. The invaders also burnt down many houses, destroyed other property, including food barns worth

millions of naira.

Locals from the area initially said the 18 corpses which were recovered and were burnt beyond recognition including women and children.

A resident, Jonah Ihundu, said the figures have risen as they have discovered more dead bodies bringing the figure to 25. According to him, the attack occurred on Iye market day when people were busy trading

and going about their business.

He said: "On that fateful day, villagers were in the market doing their trading and suddenly the herdsmen entered the market and surrounded it. Before people know what was going on, the herdsmen started shooting.

"On hearing the gunshots, people started running for their dear lives but those who made to run out of the market were gunned down.

"On the first day, 18 dead bodies were recovered but as the search continued, more dead bodies were recovered, making the number 25.

"These attacks happen almost on daily basis. Most people have lost up to five or six members of their families in the attacks.

"We are shocked that while people are relaxing in their homes or going about their businesses to make ends meet, people will just come and kill them without provocation. This is no longer about grazing. Something is wrong somewhere and the authorities must nip it in the bud."

Another local from the area, Tersugh Kur, described the attacks as not only a crime against humanity but an affront against the Benue people.

"How can people be in their home or farm or market places and you will come and kill them. Many people have lost their young ones, the worst is that women are being made widows, men are made widowers and children have become orphans.

"Our people are being forced to leave their villages. We can no longer go to our farms, now it's happening on market days. This is unacceptable," he lamented.