

Herdsmen kill police officer, 41 villagers in fresh attacks on Benue communities

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...Its genocide -LG chairman

From **Scholastica Hir**, Makurdi

Herdsmen have killed 42 persons, including a Mobile Police Officer and several others injured in four communities, Gwer West Local Government (LG), Benue State.

Our Correspondent gathered that the armed herders first attacked Aondona town on Saturday evening at about 5pm and continued their killings to Ahume community and Military Base at Tse-Orbiam in the early hours of Sunday.

A resident from the area, Agatha, said: "The herders attacked Ahume and Aondona communities and killed many women and children, some of the children were two-year-old. They killed over 20 people in Aondona including a Mobile policeman.

"People are being killed everyday so villagers have deserted the place and no way to pass through the Naka road," she said.

Another source from the area, Terser Tyona told newsmen that there was a killing spree in the area all through the weekend, saying that 10 persons were killed in Ahume community, five in Tyolaha and seven others in Tse-Orbiam community.

A priest, Rev. Fr. Solomon Atongo was shot along Naka-Makurdi road on Sunday, while two others were kidnapped near the military base in the area.

Chairman of Gwer West LGA, Victor Ormin confirmed the killings describing it as a genocide.

Ormin said: "Yes it happened and still happening. It's a pathetic situation. As we speak, we are still recovering corpses and over 30 dead bodies have been recovered so far between yesterday and today, Sunday and Monday.

"The incident in Aondona happened around 5pm on Saturday to dawn and the one in Ahume was around 4am on Sunday.

"On Saturday also, Tse-Orbiam was attacked, this is just beside the military check point, just about three kilometers to Naka.

"I buried five people yesterday and five others were taken to the mortuary on Saturday. Now, we are talking about 40 or more people killed. This is genocide," he said.

The chairman noted that he had been told categorically by the military that they don't have the mandate to act on the situation. "They said they can only engage these people when they fire at them and they told me practically that even the governor does not have the powers to order them on this. It is only the president of the country and that is very clear.

"We are not saying that the military is incompetent, the soldiers are waiting for the orders and the mandate to do what they have to do which have not been given."

He lamented the death of the policeman, who was identified as Magaji, saying, "Magaji was killed yesterday. He had dedicated his whole life to service, he is always at that junction along Naka road, whether he had bullets or not. Yesterday when the herders came, he was said to have finished his ammunition and was shouting for people to leave but he was killed yesterday. This is genocide."

In a video that has gone viral on social media, Ormin, who visited the area, threatened to resign his position as council chairman if he did not get help urgently to secure his people.

He expressed pains that until now, the federal government has not given directives to military personnel to engaging the terrorists ,saying,"So my people should be killed, they should died all before the FG would do something?

"Yesterday, I buried a father and two of his children of over 40 to 50 years of ages in Tse- Orbiam. If they cannot help me, maybe, I will leave this chairman seat and let it continues the way it is. I don't care about being a chairman of a people that are all killed. This is getting too much for me to condone," he said.

Our correspondent reports that Aondona is the village of the former first lady of the state, Eunice Ortom and also the village of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, Bishop Wilfred Angbe.