

Gunmen invade Taraba, Ebonyi communities



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...16 killed, 15 communities razed

2-year-old shot dead

Policemen on duty flee into forest

Umahi raises 9-man investigative panel

Farmer/herder quarrel led to Mambilla crisis –PPRO

The level of insecurity in the country heightened over the weekend as rampaging gunmen invaded Taraba and Ebonyi communities, killing no fewer than 16 persons in different attacks.

While at least 10 persons were reportedly killed and several others injured in a fresh attacks on Fulani communities by suspected Mambilla militia in Sardauna Local Government area of Taraba State , six others were killed in a communal clash in Ebonyi.

A victim of the attack in Taraba, Malam Abubakar Ardo, who escaped with his family told our reporter in Gembu that the group of Mambilla militia attacked Nyiwa and Yerimaru villages at about 12 noon, burning houses and killing the Fulanis.

He said almost all the houses in 15 Fulani communities were burnt down and about 10 persons, including women and children killed by the attackers. Ardo said that the timely arrival of both army and policemen prevented further killings and destruction of property.

Besides the fact that scores of people were wounded during the violence, some houses and places of worship were also destroyed. He said five out of those killed in the attacks were brought to Gembu and buried on Friday evening.

Ardo lamented that from June last year to date, Mambilla tribal militia have carried out more than 10 attacks on Fulani towns and villages but up till now nobody was arrested. He, however, confirmed that adequate security personnel have been dispatched to the trouble area leading to restoration of peace but regretted that no perpetrators were arrested.

Confirming the figures to Sunday Telegraph, Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) Mr. David Misal (ASP), said crisis erupted in Nyiwa and Yerimaru areas on Thursday as a result of a misunderstanding between a farmer and a herder.

According to the PPRO, five persons lost their lives during the renewed crises while several houses were burnt down. He said units of mobile policemen and soldiers from the 20 Battalion in Serti have been deployed to the area, adding that the situation, led to the burning of several homes and killing of many cows, has been brought under control.

In Ebonyi State, six persons reportedly lost their lives and properties worth millions of naira destroyed in a renewed boundary dispute between the people of Enyigba, Abakaliki Local government area, Ebonyi State and their neighbouring Alike community, in Ikwo Local Government area of the state. The two neighbouring communities have been at war since 30 years.

In the renewed crisis, a two year old boy and five others were shot dead. It was gathered that militia group stormed Nwelem Market in Alike Ikwo shooting at people. They killed six persons and set houses ablaze.

The Nwaelem Market is located opposite the house of the immediate past governor of the, Chief Martin Elechi.

Policemen on duty at the Alike Ikwo Station, reportedly fled into the forest owing to the sophisticated weapons the militia paraded during the attack. Many people have also fled the area to seek refuge in distant villages.

Chief Press Secretary to Ebonyi State Governor David Umahi, Emmanuel Uzor, confirmed the renewed crisis but refused to talk

about the casualties. While briefing journalists in Abakaliki on the outcome of the state Executive council meeting, Uzor said the state government has directed the Secretary to the State Government, Prof Bernard Odoh to set up a nine- man committee to look into and resolve the crisis within seven days.

Umahi directed all the warring communities to cease hostilities with immediate effect and instructed security agencies to arrest anybody fomenting trouble in any of the communities immediately.

He disclosed that the government has directed local councils to make by-laws to prohibit sale or lease of land for the purposes of cattle grazing, ranching, animal movement exploration/prospecting, among others without first obtaining the permission from the Council chairman who in turn must obtain the authorization power from the governor of the state, stating that failure to comply will attract severe punishment.