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NEWS

Killer herdsmen arrive Ebonyi



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By **UCHENNA INYA** 

One of Okemini's children crying over the killing of his father, Nwachi Okemini by herdsmen



Augustina Okemini, wife of one of the deceased, Okemini Nwachi being consoled by some villagers



A farmer drenched with his son's blood following attack by herdsmen in Akaeze, Ivo LGA of the state



communities in the state. UCHENNA INYA, in Ebonyi, reports on the rising herdsmen invasion in the state and the increasing list of casualties.

Ebonyi State has been known to be among the states that are very accommodative to herdsmen. Some herdsmen in the state has lived for 50 years.

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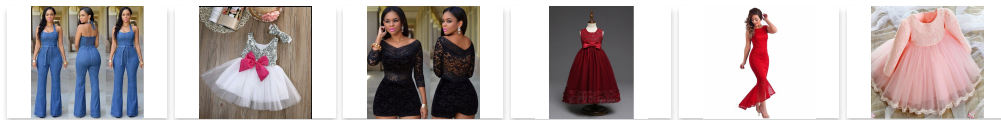
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According to investigation, some of them married from the state. The relationship between the herdsmen and their host communities continued to be strong until few weeks ago broke down, leading to loss of lives and properties worth millions of naira.

As a matter of fact, about 10 lives have been lost in the state in the last three weeks as herdsmen menace with their host villagers having the highest figure.



 
JUMIA 

Only two herdsmen, one from Ugwulangu in Ohaozara Local Government Area and a from Igbeagu community in Izzi Local Government Area lost their lives.

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village, Igbeagu community in Izzi Local Government Area, communities in the state herdsmen have invaded included Ugwulangwu, Okposi, Akaeze, Ishiagu, Ishielu, Agb

Mgbabor among others. In some of these communities, women were raped. The ramp herdsmen vandalized some vehicles belonging to the villagers.

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They also cut down economic trees of the people. However, one herdsman lost his life in the incident. One of the villagers, Okemini Nwachi, had gone to the back of his house to fetch a native cow to his tree when he was attacked by a herdsman.

The herdsman cut off Okemini's two hands and gave him a cut on the head. He died at the Nduvia Hospital in the area where he was rushed for medical treatment. Another victim simply identified as Iyele was attacked when he went to know what was happening at the back of Okemini's house. He was cut on the head and he also died at the Ndubia Hospital where he was rushed to.

When some men in the village who were in their farms heard of the incident, they quickly rushed home and two of the herdsmen were apprehended. One sustained injuries.

Soldiers, who were first alerted of the incident, later came and took the two herdsmen. One of the herdsmen however died on the road.

Five persons from the village who sustained serious injuries are currently receiving treatment at the Accident and Emergency Unit of Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki 2(FETHA

Narrating the incident, wife of one of the victims and a mother of eight, Augustina O said: “We were cooking in the morning when my husband decided to go and tie his native cow to a tree at the back of our house. He had successfully tied the native cow and started walking back to house when he heard our neighbours crying and decided to go there and know what was happening there.

“On getting there, a Fulani herdsman armed with cutlass attacked him with the machete and cut him three times cutting his two hands off and then cut him on the head and he fell

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out N5,000 I was having but he died. I am a mother of eight and I want government to my aid. I have no other person except him.

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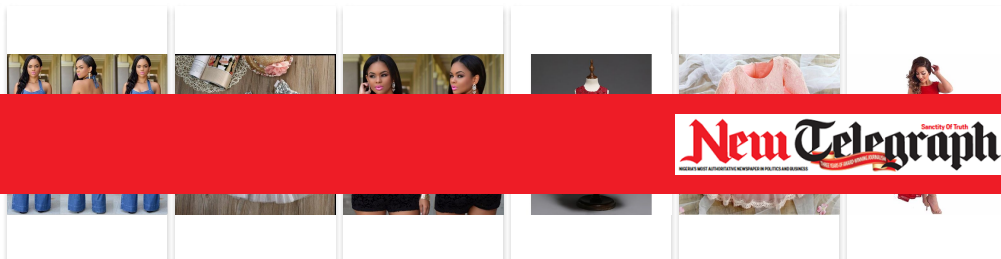
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My husband was all I have. Our children are very tender”. Wife of the Iyiele, Christian on her part, said: “In the morning, I was cooking rice when my one of my children said that Fulani Herdsman had killed someone. My husband on hearing this, picked up a stick and rushed to the place.

He was holding a palm frond stick and said he wanted to go and know what actually transpired. On getting there, he saw Okemini Nwachi cut by the herdsman. Nwachi was lying in his pool of blood. I told my husband to come back and get a cutlass.



I told him this four times but he refused. As he was there, he asked the herdsman name. The herdsman replied “Buhari no dey here o”. “The herdsman quickly besieged him and him with machete. He cut him on the head and other parts of the body.

There was no one in the village when the herdsman invaded our area. I am a mother. The state police Public Relations Officer, ASP Loveth Odah, confirmed the incident to correspondent.

Odah said: “This morning, around 9:32am when we were about going for management committee meeting, the Commissioner of Police received a call that there was trouble between Fulani herdsmen and the residents of Enyanwuigwe village, Igbeagu community in Izere. “The DPO reported that a villager went to the bush to tie his own native cow to a tree.

We don’t know exactly what happened between the two because the man is late now. The line trouble started.

“The Fulani herdsman cut off the villager’s two hands and killed him. May be, the man raised the alarm that attracted other villagers. Three or more of them were injured by the herdsmen. For now, three of the community members have been confirmed dead. Then the community members succeeded in arresting the two Fulani herdsmen and handed them over to soldiers”.

The incident has thrown the villagers into mourning while a team of policemen have been deployed to the area to prevent further breakdown of law and order. Some villagers were relocating to another village for fear of attack when our correspondent visited. The incident came a week after four persons in Akaeze, Ivo Local Government Area of the state were seriously injured in a clash between herdsmen and some farmers in the area.

The clashes left both parties with injuries. While a farmer in Akaeze was butchered with a machete, about three herdsmen were attacked on the head. The farmer, who sustained serious machete cuts injuries, is receiving treatment at the Emergency Ward of Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki (FETHA 1) while the injured herdsmen are receiving treatment at a hospital in Awugu, Enugu State.

Herdsmen from Mpu, Enugu State invaded farmlands in Akaeze and destroyed farm crops which angered one of the farmers, who confronted them, leading to his machete attack on the rampaging herdsmen. The farmer, who has machete cuts all over his body, has been unconscious in the hospital.



Government Area until investigation into the matter was concluded. Umahi, who summoned an emergency security meeting with security chiefs in the state, leaders of herdsmen, local

government chairmen and stakeholders of Ivo Local Government, set up 10-man committee to investigate the attacks.

“This issue is becoming complicated because if we had seen cow, we will now believe attacked cows and they butchered him. I want the CP, the Army and the SSS to set up committee. It should be 10-man committee to investigate the matter and we will call another emergency security meeting on the matter.

“The investigation should commence immediately. But I am banning any herdsman from entering Ivo Local Government until this investigation is completed and I want the security men to carry out my instruction. No herdsman should enter the place. No cattle should enter Ivo Local Government again until investigation is completed. “Security people, I want you people to note it down that any herdsman that is coming into Ebonyi must follow the procedure and must not carry animals late into Ebonyi State. You bring animals by vehicle and there is no cattle routes in Ebonyi State. There is no grazing reserve in Ebonyi. There is no cattle colony in Ebonyi.

“So, no animal should come to Ebonyi by routes. It is by vehicle and before they are coming to the Ardo they are coming from should do a letter that they are coming in here. You cannot come into somebody's farm without his permission. You can't do that. “My prayer is that all victims will all be alive. At the end of the day, when the report is completed, whoever is the first aggressor will go to prison. I will send the person to prison no matter whom the

“I am banning any form of entering anybody's farm in Ebonyi State. Anybody that da

I have said it severally that there is no cattle routes in Ebonyi. There is no grazing route, there is no colony. “Anybody that kills the cows of a Fulani man, should go to prison for one year and also pay for the cattle.

Any Fulani man that destroys the farm of a farmer, will go to prison for one year and the cost of the farmland,” Umahi stated.

Umahi, who had invited National Chairman of Myetti Allah, Alhaji Bello Bodejo; the Leaders of Myetti Allah in South East and South South states of the federation for security meeting over the herdsmen invasion in Igbeagu village in which three villagers and a herdsman died, warned that the incessant killings by herdsmen may spark-off nation not properly addressed. He called for caution in handling the herdsmen menace. The Government House, Abakaliki, during an enlarged security meeting over the recent c

The leaders and stakeholders of the troubled community as well as all the security chiefs of the state were in attendance during the enlarged security meeting. Umahi, who described the killings in Enyanwu Igwe village as unprovoked killings, ordered herdsmen around the place to leave the place until he calms the embittered villagers down to avoid reprisal attack.

“It is unprovoked killings, life is so sacred. You can’t kill people as if they are fowls. I am a warrior. I physically held them not to go for retaliation. The herdsmen there in Igbagu should leave the place for now until I can calm everybody down.



The way we are going, it can provoke national war and it will not help anybody. If there is a reprisal attack, I will hold all the leaders squarely responsible. I will charge all of you

reprisal attack. “The lives of every Ebonyian is very dear to me.

God forbid, I can’t withstand where 76 people were killed like in Benue, I can’t withstand. Some people may be fighting to die but we fight to live. Let’s use wisdom and handle the matter. While addressing Umahi, National Chairman of Myetti Allah, Bello Bodejo, along with the governor that killings in the country could cause chaos in the country. He said the state has been very accommodative to the herdsmen, warning that it should not be allowed to

“Ebonyi State is very peaceful and it is accommodating to our members. It has been so accommodating to our members even more than some northern states of the federation. We condemn these killings in this state. There are minors and migrants who are causing lots of problems.

There are also criminals moving as cattle herders, who are causing these havocs. The Chairman of Myetti Allah of various states in the South East and South are all here and are not happy with what happened. We condemn these killings in totality.

“Nigeria is confronted with so many security challenges and one of them is the unforgotten farmer/ herder conflict. If this conflict is not resolved, it has the potential of throwing the country into unnecessary chaos”, he said. The National Chairman and the leaders of the herders across south east and south south will meet with the herdsmen in the state to resolve the crisis.