

Again, herdsmen kill 21 in Benue, Nasarawa



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Houses burnt down, residents flee

Attacks an act of terrorism, says Ortom

Another wave of violence and bloodletting was witnessed in Benue and Nasarawa states, with many feared killed and several injured.

At least five persons were feared killed while many were injured, after suspected AK47-wielding herdsmen attacked Kadarko town in Nasarawa State. Similarly, about 16 people were killed in Benue State, with many also sustaining injuries.

In Nasarawa State witnesses said that commercial activities were grounded following sporadic shootings by gunmen. The gunmen also set many buildings on fire.

The attack came barely four months after gunmen believed to be herdsmen invaded Kadarko at midnight killing nine persons and inflicting injuries on scores.

A witness said: "The gunmen attacked Kadarko town at midday on Tuesday, shooting sporadically. The gunmen were alleged to have cut off a young man's hand, identified as Inyogun, about 8.30p.m. They hurriedly fled the scene before the arrival of security operatives.

Some of the fleeing gunmen ran into law enforcement agents and engaged them in a gun duel. When the dust settled, there was a head count, leading to the discovery of four dead persons, including an aged woman. Also, one person was killed, while two others were injured at Tse Underah in Kenje district of Awe Local Government Area of the state after another set of gunmen attacked the community about 9.30p.m.

A former councillor in the community, Hon. Kureve, said the attackers invaded the village after most of the villagers had gone to bed.

He said that apart from the one person that was killed, two others escaped with severe gunshot wounds.

Kureve called on the state government to prevail on security agents, to end the killings.

When contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Idirisu John Kennedy, an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), said that he was busy in a meeting and would get back to our

correspondent in two hours' time. But as at the time of filling this report, the image maker was yet to back to the correspondent.

Similarly, herdsmen militia on Tuesday night made a surprise incursion into Gbeji and other towns in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State again, killing at least 16 people and inflicting injuries on several others.

The attack came less than 24 hours before Governor Samuel Ortom left the state for his annual leave in China. He described the herdsmen attacks on the state as an extension of the terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram.

It was learnt that the gruesome attack, which started about 6p.m. on that fateful day after local residents had closed from their farms, lasted for more than three hours.

Among those reportedly killed were Mtserkyaa Igbugh, Kananfa Amarfu, Tyavyar Akau, Orfega Hiikyar, Kanyitor Uor and a passer-by said to be 75 years old. Two trucks of Mobile policemen were said to be patrolling the now deserted communities, both within and outside, to forestall further attacks.

The assailants also attacked some communities in Tswarev in Logo Local Government Area where they killed at least three people.

A resident of Gbeji town, Mr. Abraham Ngyenev, said among those whose corpses were recovered, included two elderly men, two children, two women and one young man.

Ngyenev, who said the attackers came in a Guerrilla warfare style, also set ablaze several houses while food items harvested and stored were not spared as they were burnt alongside other property worth millions of naira.

In Logo Local Government Area, the rampaging herdsmen injured several persons, most of whom were rushed to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Areas attacked are Channel One, Orveren and Ajura villages, where three people, including Tor Imbor, Aondowua Mnyor and Msugh Ajura were killed. Also, scores of people were injured and property destroyed.

Some residents of the area, Terkimbir Hemen and Jacob Iorkyaa said that the attackers came in the night, ransacking the villages.

Hemen particularly noted that the attacks, which lasted for more than three hours went on without any interruption by the security agencies, who allegedly watched helplessly.

Chairmen of Ukum Local Government Area, Mr. Iberlogo Tortyokyaa and his Logo counterpart, Mr. Richard Nyajo, who confirmed the attacks, lamented the wanton killings of people in the area. They called on the Federal Government to live up to its responsibility of protecting lives of its citizens.

Nyajo said the herdsmen extended their attacks to Tombo, Ukemberagya, Mbagber, especially at Anyiin, Anyibe, Azege and Tsukwa communities, where they ambushed people plying some of the routes on markets days, killing citizens without provocations.

The state Commissioner of Police, Fatai Owoseni, who also confirmed the attacks, said four dead bodies were so far recovered, while investigation was still in progress.

He said: "There was an incident in Gbeji and we are investigating. There was an attack by suspected herdsmen in the area, but we can confirm that as at this morning, four dead bodies were recovered there. We have stepped up security in the area."

Ortom, while reacting to incessant killings in the state, shortly before he left for China for his annual leave, said the manner in which the armed men invaded communities of the state and slaughter people was not different from the mindless acts of Boko Haram in the North-East.

He added: "They come with sophisticated weapons and kill people, inflict machete cuts and chase them away."

Ortom said equally disturbing in the pattern of attacks by the killers was their trademark of occupying communities after killing and sacking the inhabitants.

He said: "In some cases, they do not have the herds. They just come with their weapons, kill and chase the people out and take over the land. That is the worrisome part of it."

The governor condemned recent attacks by the killers on Gwer West Local Government Area of the state, which left many people dead and property worth millions destroyed.

Ortom said the trend of attacks on Benue was beyond mere grazing of livestock. He argued that if the invaders were only interested in grazing, the massive destruction of lives and property would not have been their priority.

The governor emphasised the need for greater security presence in parts of the state known to be flashpoints in order to avoid further loss of lives and worsening humanitarian crisis with over 170,000 internally displaced persons in various camps across the state.