

Bloodbath in Zamfara, Taraba, Benue



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...as gunmen kill 92

Again, gunmen have killed about 92 people in Taraba, Zamfara and Benue states. Despite the presence of the Inspector-General of Police (IG), Ibrahim Idris, who is on a threeday official visit to Taraba State, herdsmen on Wednesday evening invaded Jandeikyula village in Wukari Local Government Area of the state, killing at least 25 people.

This came as gunmen invaded the villages of Kuru-Kuru and Jarkuka in Anka Local Government Area of Zamfara State, killing at least 26 people. Also, armed men struck again in Benue State and killed 41 villagers overnight, according to residents and officials. The Special Adviser to Governor Darius Ishaku of Taraba State on Students' Affairs, Mr. Samson Tor- Musa (an engineer), who is from the area, confirmed the killing of 25 persons by armed militia in a telephone interview with our correspondent. Also a witness, Mr. Victor Iortim, who narrowly escaped death in the attack, said that the attackers came in large numbers and launched attack on the village about 11p.m. on Wednesday, killing everyone at sight and burning houses.

He said: "They were about 200 in number. I went to a neighbouring village and I was on my way back to Jandeikyula when I sighted them. I quickly hid in the bush. They were well armed with sophisticated weapons. There was no way I could call anybody because there was no network on my phone. Wukari Local Government Chairman, Hon. Daniel Adi, said many people were killed. He said: "I don't have the casualty figure now. I'm on my way to the village now, and will give details of the casualty figure and the wounded when I'm back from the village."

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP David Missal, also confirmed the attack, saying that details were still sketchy. The attack came barely 48 hours after Idris inaugurated a mobile police base in Takum and confirmed reinforcement of three additional units of police personnel to Taraba State to curb the incessant attacks. Idris is still in the state, even as the Army Operation Ayem Akpatuma has been extended by two months in Taraba. In recent times, Taraba State has witnessed sustained attacks, which have claimed lives of many with property worth millions of naira destroyed.

Takum, Donga, Ussa, Gassol and Bali local governments are the worst hit areas. Survivors of the attack in Zamfara State, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, said the suspected bandits earlier invaded Kuru-Kuru village where they killed about 10 people before went to Jarkuka where they killed 16 people.

“The community of Jarkuka was not the initial target but had been affected and lost 16 innocent lives for their effort to mobilise for giving support to the attacked Kuru-Kuru neighbouring village,” they narrated. The two villages are closed to Bawar Daji village of the same local government where armed men had attacked and killed over 30 people two weeks ago. Confirming the incident, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Shehu Muhammad, said a signal was received giving the information about an attack on illegal miners at Kuru-Kuru village but the level of casualty was yet-to-be identified.

Residents of Benue State said that the killings occurred yesterday in two communities in Logo and Ukum local government areas. The residents, according to PREMIUM TIMES, also said the death toll might rise sharply in the coming hours, as more bodies were still being removed from nearby bushes. The attacks came a day after 10 people were killed by gunmen said to be wearing military uniform.

“The first attack happened in Tse Hwer in Ukembergye/Tsweray Council Ward in Logo Local Government around 6.30p.m. to this morning,” said a senior state government official who did not want to be named, saying he had been warned by federal authorities for talking to the media in the past. “Some people are saying their families are missing, but we haven’t been able to confirm how many exactly,” he added.

The victims were said to be two men and one woman. When they arrived about 6p.m. in Jande-Ikyura in Ukum Local Government Area, the gunmen appeared determined to wipe out the entire community, said a resident of the area who said he had been to the village yesterday morning to witness the aftermath. Jande- Ikyura is a border community between Ukum Local Government in Benue State and Wukari Local Government Area in Taraba State.

“It was like they wanted to be sure that all the villagers were killed before they would run back to their hideouts,” said 48-year-old Isaac Ihiev. “They killed 22 people who were living there.” Ihiev said three of the attackers, who were killed when some youths responded to the assault, were found in military uniform.

He said: “Three of them were killed and they dressed like soldiers when their bodies were moved out from the bush.” Ihiev, who lives in a nearby village that falls under Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, said said efforts were underway to find the missing people. Ihiev had mistakenly described Jande-Ikyura as being in Wukari LGA due to its proximity, but government officials latter clarified the confusion to PREMIUM TIMES. A resident of Zaki Biam, the headquarters of Ukum Local Government Area, who arrived at the scene about 12.15p.m., said the bodies had risen to 41 as at 2:09p.m. yesterday and still raised fears the number could rise.

Terver Akase, a spokesperson for Governor Samuel Ortom, said he had heard of the killings and expressed sadness about the shocking death toll. The Taraba State Police Commissioner, David Akinremi, and his Benue State counterpart, Fatai Owoseni, refused to comment on the attacks. Emmanuel Bello, a spokesperson for Governor Darius Ishaku, said news of the killings had spread to Jalingo, Taraba State capital. He, however, said he didn’t have all the details as yet. He said a military panel probing alleged complicity by soldiers in the ongoing killings had arrived the state and was sitting in Jalingo.