

Herdsman overrun Benue villages, allegedly kill 100 people

- Scores flee homes, several houses burnt
- OPWS, Police keep mum

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Gunmen have overrun four wards in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State and murdered more than 100 people.

The victims included women, children and the older people.

The suspected herdsman also murdered at least 16 people in Plateau State.

The attackers, who residents described as Fulani, also set ablaze several houses, displacing hordes of residents in Benue State.

The wards are Mbayongu, Mbatyura/Mberek, Utange and Yoyo.

The attack came less than 24 hours after suspected Fulani militia invaded the Tse-Ancha settlement close to Agan community housing the Abagena Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp and murdered nine people among them a kindred head.

The *New Telegraph* learnt that in the latest at-

tack, the gunmen invaded the area on Saturday night and launched the attack which spilled over till Sunday and continued till yesterday. They were burning houses and killing people simultaneously.

A resident of one of the communities, Mr. Edward Kwaghaondo, said the communities had not known peace in the last two months.

He said: "For the past two months, it has been raids and burning of property and killing of farmers by gunmen."

"These attacks have forced some of the indigenous people to evacuate some of their belongings and families to get shelter in safer places."

The Chairman of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area, Mr. Alfred Atera, confirmed the killings.

He said: "I have details of how the people were running away from Fulani people and how they (the invaders) were shooting sporadically. Four council wards are under attack by the Fulani - Yoyo, Utange,

Mbatyura-Mberek and Mbayongu.

"More than 100 people were killed at different places and as they (the armed herders) killed, they dropped and continued going. Some were able to claim the corpses of their people for burial."

"I told the military that the attackers have developed a strategy they are not attacking one place; if they attack Kwaghaondo now, the next thing you hear is they are in Yoyo and at the same time they are attacking Utange. So the military are going here and there, before they could go, the attackers have finished and go to another point, that is the situation in Katsina-Ala now."

"The authorities are aware of all these things. As I am speaking with you, my traditional rulers are here to see what we can do at their own level."

Also, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Catherine

Sewuese Anene, said she had not received reports of the attack at press time.

Meanwhile, armed men killed at least 16 people, mostly women and children, during attacks on Dong village in Jos North and Kwi village in Riyom local government areas of Plateau State.

Governor Simon Lalong and the senator representing Plateau North Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Istifanus Gyang, said they were deeply saddened by the killing, in cold blood, of 16 people at Dong Kasa and Kwi on Sunday night.

A resident of Dong village told the *New Telegraph* yesterday that Fulani herdsman gained access into the village late Sunday night and killed an entire family of six, including a cleaner.

According to him, the attackers also murdered two others separately.

Another source said that the gunmen also the same Sunday invaded Kwi village in Riyom Local Government Area about 11pm and wiped out a family of seven.

The lawmaker repre-

senting Riyom Constituency in the state House of Assembly, Hon. Timothy Dantong, confirmed the killing of a whole family at Kwi village.

He said the attack took place on Sunday night by suspected Fulani herdsman while the villagers were asleep.

Dantong, who was on his way to the village, described the attack as barbaric and urged the security agencies to arrest the criminals.

He expressed sadness that his constituents were persistently being killed by gunmen. According to him, Riyom has suffered attacks since 2001.

However, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP Gabriel Oga-ba, confirmed the killing of only seven people in a statement yesterday in Jos.

He said: "On Sunday 23/05/2021, about 2000hrs (8pm), the command received a distress call that yet-to-be-identified gunmen came out suddenly from a nearby bush, invaded Dong village, Jos South Local Government Area and

killed seven persons.

"A combined team of policemen, STF, vigilantes led by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Department of Operations, raced swiftly to the scene but the hoodlums had already fled back into the bush."

"Investigation is ongoing. Frantic effort is on to arrest the fleeing suspects. Meanwhile, security has been beefed-up in that area to prevent escalation of violence."

Lalong, who doubles as the Chairman of the Northern Governors Forum, described the killing as barbaric, callous and a desperate attempt to rupture the peace and security of the state.

In a statement issued by the state Commissioner for Information and Communication, Hon. Dan Man-jang, the governor commiserated with families who lost loved ones and valuables in the two separate attacks.

Lalong vowed to ensure that the cherished values of peace and security and the sanctity of lives remained sacrosanct in the state.

