

Taiwo Jimoh
Communal killings

In the last 48 hours, gunmen suspected to be Fulani herders and militants from Jukun allegedly invaded Arufu and Michia and killed 15 people in both communities of Benue State.

The state is becoming a "free killing field" as it was reported that no fewer than 92 residents were killed between April and June, 2023.

It was learnt that the attacks were often attributed to armed herders, who have been terrorising the state and turning it into a haven for gunmen, as the violence has displaced thousands of people and destroyed property worth millions of naira.

Those targeted during the attack are mostly innocent citizens, which includes; traditional rulers, women, children, security personnel, religious leaders and farmers.

Recent incident

However, on Sunday January 7, in a renewed attack, seven people were killed by gunmen suspected to be herders in Logo Local Government Area of the state.

The suspected armed herders were said to have attacked a commercial vehicle between Arufu and Chembe villages and shot at passengers.

The attackers were later reported to have invaded the Mchia community in the night and killed another seven passengers.

Several others were reported to have been missing during the invasion.

According to a community leader, Anawah Joseph, the attackers laid ambush on the road and shot at a commercial vehicle.

He said: "Armed herders in collaboration with Jukun militias on Sunday shot at a commercial vehicle heading to Iorza and some passengers were injured."

"They also invaded Mchia where they shot and killed eight people. It was an unfortunate incident. The militants also slaughtered people who were fast asleep in their various houses in Michia."

"I am appealing to the state government to come to our rescue, I don't know what next to do again. I am tired of this senseless killing, destruction of property and vandalisation of farm lands. We want lasting peace in the state, we are all brothers and sisters. We don't need the killing anymore."

LGA chairman

The chairman of the local government, Rev Adagbe Jonathan, who spoke to our correspondent after the unfortunate incident said another eight people were killed while several others are still missing.

Jonathan said, "it is true that armed herders in collaboration with Jukun militias attacked my people on Sunday at about 9pm."

"With the help of policemen, we were able to recover five corpses on Sunday night, while two corpses were recovered the next day. They also shot at a commercial vehicle where two people were injured."

"As am talking to you now, the two people who sustained injuries have been taken to the hospital at Anyiin, but many people are still missing. I have reported the incident to the security adviser to the governor."

He added that, the attackers were armed herders hired by Jukun militias to attack them.

Unending Attacks: 15 killed as gunmen invade 2 Benue villages

...we want peace, council chair pleads



Gov Alia

"I believe we are going to overcome the challenge as God liveth. Because we can no longer bear the pains and agony of burying innocent people on daily basis in our various villages."

8 murdered at Chembe village

Meanwhile, on Saturday September 3, 2023, one Monday Hembaku of Chembe village was said to have been accosted and killed on his Cassava farm by Fulani herdsman.

"Five days later on Friday September 29, 2023 at about 2 pm, two women from the same village (Chembe), Mrs. Iember Ornguga and Dinnah Chembe were hacked with machete and badly wounded by Fulani marauders when they went to fetch firewood."

"They were rushed to a medical facility by men of Operation Wilds Stroke stationed at Arufu, a nearby settlement, where they are recuperating. Another attack also took place on Wednesday October 11, 2023 around 9 am at Iorza along Tse Abiem Road where two young men, Mr. Mbaadega Vihinga and Chuku Gaku who went to buy fish at Zebo Market near River Benue were waylaid on their way back by Fulani militia who inflicted them with various degrees of injuries."

Also, three people were reported to have been killed by gunmen suspected to be armed herdsman at Imatom village in Logo Local Government Area of the state.

A community leader, Anawa Joseph, said the killing of people in the local government area by suspected herders have assumed a dangerous dimension.

Anawa gave the names of the latest victims of armed herdsman to include; Tertsea Terkimbi Adagundu, Tertsea Mkpou and Mimido Umburga.

He said: "These three young men were killed by Fulani militia at Imatom village square, near Chembe, Ukemberagya, Logo Local Govt, Benue State yesterday, Saturday, at about 9 pm."



IGP Egbetokun

"Their corpses have been deposited at NKST hospital morgue, Anyiin."

"All these renewed attacks and killings without any provocation are aimed at displacing the peasant farmers in order to pave the way for cattle to graze on their crops which are yet to be harvested."

The community leader, who chronicled the spate of renewed attacks by Fulani herdsman on the people of Gaambe-Tiev in the local government area since the beginning of September 2023 said the Saturday attack was the fourth.

Anawa, however called on both state and Federal Government to as a matter of urgency deploy security to secure the area.

27 killed in two communities

However, another 27 persons have been killed by an unknown armed gang in a bloody attack on Adogo Ugbam, Akpuuna and Diom communities in Ukum Local Government Area of the state.

The attack on July 7, 2023 also left several persons with life-threatening injuries.

It was gathered that the armed men had attacked a funeral at Adogo Ugbam community, where they killed three mourners, just as another gang invaded Akpuuna and Diom communities, where 24 persons were murdered.

According to a local source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the armed men whose motive was not known, stormed the villages on motorbikes killing the three mourners at Adogo Ugbam village at about 9pm., after which they invaded Akpuuna and Diom the following morning, when the local market in the area was busy with the day's activities.

He said: "Nobody saw this coming, the armed men stormed Diom and Akpuuna on motorbikes at about 11 am, when the local market in the community had picked up with activities after killing three mourners at Adogo Ugbam village last night."

"At Akpuuna and Diom they shot at anybody they saw, mercilessly killing the people in the market and in the two neigh-

bouring villages."

"There was pandemonium; people ran for their lives, but many could not escape. Apart from those killed, many are still missing; and from all indications that number will rise. After killing the people and injuring many, the armed men set fire on people's property and fled the scene."

"As we speak, people are fleeing the attacked communities but the search for missing persons is still ongoing. It is a sad day for our people."

Confirming the development, the Chairman of Ukum LGA, Mr. Kartyo Tyombur, said information at his disposal indicated that 24 bodies had been recovered from the two attacked villages.

He said: "I learnt that after attacking Akpuuna and Diom, the armed gang fled the scene, but on getting to the Tine-Nune community on the Zaki Biam-Wukari

Road they met the military who confronted them."

"Though no one knows how many of them were killed, but I believe some of them must have been neutralised in that exchange."

The Chairman, who decried the attack, said no one knew the motive of the attackers.

Killing is barbaric

Mr. Adegoke Adele, a security expert said government's response to the issue of gun violence in Benue State has been a topic of concern.

He said the issue of insecurity in the state is an age long issue that needed lasting solution and peace, because innocent people have been killed on different occasions.

"The violence, often attributed to armed herders, has led to numerous deaths and displacement of people. Despite the recurring attacks, some have criticised the government for not taking sufficient action to address the situation, with accusations of not doing enough to stop the violence and even encouraging the herders to continue their attacks."

"The killings is 'barbaric,' the law enforcement agencies should intervene and restore peace. The proliferation of small and light weapons in the region has been linked to the resurgence in killings. The attacks have been described as 'pure murderous insurgency' and have been condemned as 'vile, evil, and satanic.'"

He added that the government's efforts to address the issue have been called into question, and there is a growing need for effective measures to end the violence in the state.

Police

When contacted, the Police Public Relation Officer (PPRO), Catherine Anene said she was not aware of the incident.

She however promised to get back to our correspondent on the matter.

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