



Nigeria: 27 Killed in Renewed Fulani Herdsmen Attack

BY GEORGE OKOH, 11 APRIL 2013

About 27 persons were reportedly killed, including women and children while 17 others are said to be missing in Mbalagh ward in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, after suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked the area.

A source said there had been killings in the area starting from Saturday till the early hours of Wednesday.

A member representing Makurdi North at the state House of Assembly, Avine Agbom, questioned the involvement of the Army in a civil peaceful protest which had the blessing of the Benue State Police Command.

He accused the soldiers of carrying out the illicit operation which led to the death of 27 persons within a space of four days, adding that only professional gunmen could have carried out the level of destruction done to the village by the invaders.

"I think the military are so involved in this matter because the operation carried out was highly sophisticated. The operation was highly too professional."

Meanwhile, as a result of the renewed killings, about 2,000 women and youths from the affected area embarked on a peaceful protest blocking the Makurdi Lafia Road for several hours. The women's action led to a jam as both motorists and commuters heading outside or coming into the state capital could not gain entry until the soldiers attached to the 72 Battalion near the protest scene dispersed the crowd with canisters (tear gas).

Speaking with journalists on the development, an eyewitness, who was physically battered with injuries on his right eyes, alleged that the women trooped out to draw government's attention to their plights.

He said the last straw which forced the women to the street as early as 7:00am Wednesday was the rape of a 13-year-old girl by three suspected Fulani invaders.

While condemning the attack on the protesting women, Agbom queried the authority of the soldiers who dispersed the protesters, using force which he claimed eventually led to the death of a boy and several injured persons now in the hospital.

"It is unthinkable! Why were soldiers involved in a civil demonstration? Are the soldiers neutral in this matter or involved?" he asked.

Efforts to reach the Commander of 72 Battalion on telephone proved abortive.

He also alleged that the Fulanis had long liaised with the soldiers of the battalion within the locality to unleash terror on their people, lamenting however that government has done anything about the matter despite several petitions to it.

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