



Ruins



Homes reduced to rubble

A HARVEST OF DEATHS IN TAKAD

THE TAKAD COMMUNITIES OF KAURA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN KADUNA STATE HAVE BEEN RECORDING PERSISTENT ATTACKS FROM SUSPECTED FULANI GUNMEN SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR. SEVERAL PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN KILLED, WHILE THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN DISPLACED. **REUBEN BUHARI** REPORTS

In the beginning...

When the Takad Chiefdom in Kaura Local Government of Kaduna State was created in 2001 by the Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi Government, it elicited unprecedented joy in the area. For decades, the people had been yearning for such. It brought most of the Takad people under one territory, except for those in Plateau State and the few scattered in other chiefdoms within the state. It joined the two other chiefdoms of Oegworok and Sholio that make up the Local Government in the southern part of the state.

Some of the Takad people are mountain dwellers, with their ancestral lands atop the scenic Takad hills. Efforts by the colonial government to bring them down

from the hills for tax collection was not completely successful, as most stuck to the hills, where they had farmed and grazed their cattle's and goats for decades. The agrarian communities sharing borders with Plateau State co-existed peacefully with its neighbours. Even the post-presidential election crises of 2011 were mostly around the Oegworok axis. The Takad and the Sholio people had no such issue, especially with its Hausa-fulani people of the same communities.

Then, the attacks...

Things suddenly changed this year with sustained and coordinated attacks from suspected Fulani herdsmen operating from around the communities and Plateau State. Scores have been killed, injured and displaced. According to the paramount ruler of the Takad people, Chief Tobias Nkom Wada, five villages - Kirim, Zangan,

Tangan, Zilan and Mafan - were attacked by suspected Fulani gunmen, on April 1, 2013 leaving in their wake many dead bodies and over 200 burnt buildings. They include houses, schools, churches and the chief's palace. Earlier, on March 20, the communities were attacked and some people were killed and houses burnt. Then on May 13, 2013, the suspected Fulani attackers again stormed five villages - Afang, Tangang, Zangan, Zakum and Isokung - where 13 people were killed and 85 houses razed. Yet, again on September 3, Adu Village was attacked where 10 people were killed and scores injured. Then on September 29, 2013, at around 5:24am, gunmen, again, attacked Zangan Village and killed 14 people with scores of houses burnt.

The attack of September 3, was the most revealing in terms of the alleged complicity of the suspected Fulani gun-

men. After the attack on Adu Village, a witness claimed the attackers moved back to a stream to wash within Sholio territory close to Matuak Village. While they were bathing at the stream, a Sholio woman spotted them allegedly washing knives and shirts stained with blood. She retreated quietly and alerted Sholio youths who surrounded and arrested them. It was then realized that the attackers allegedly included some of the Fulani resident in Sholio. The youth who made the arrest handed them over to security agencies.

What triggered the killings?

What triggered the killings from a hitherto peaceful neighbour? It was alleged that Chief Wada signed an agreement in 2011 with the Fulani living in Takad land, allowing them the right to graze on Takad hills. The agreement, supposedly covers only those Fulani living in the land