

# Fulani Herdsmen Sack Enugu Community, 48 Feared Dead

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*Some of the houses destroyed by suspected Fulani herdsmen*



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Christopher Isiguzo in Enugu

Tragedy struck in the sleepy Ukpabi Nimbo community in Uzo-Uwani council of Enugu State, monday, as rampaging Fulani herdsmen attacked the area killing scores of residents mostly farmers and destroyed property worth millions of naira.

Sources in the area put the casualty figure at 48, though the police is yet to put a definite

figure.

Sixty persons reportedly sustained varying degrees of injuries while tens of residential buildings were equally torched, according to sources in the area.

Eye witness accounts had it that the herdsmen in their numbers invaded the community in the early hours of yesterday with guns, bows and arrows, machetes and swords and ensured that any human being within sight was hacked down.

But for the arrival of a combined team of police and military personnel led by the Police Commissioner in the state, Nwodibo Ekechukwu, in the community, the situation would have degenerated and perhaps gone out of hand as they made efforts to repel the attack.

As at the time of filing this report, no fewer than 30 corpses, most of which were recovered from farmlands were said to have been deposited at the Bishop Shanahan Hospital, Nsukka, while intensive search for more bodies are ongoing in the area. Those injured were also taken to different hospitals for medical attention.

A mortician at Bishop Shanahan Hospital who spoke to THISDAY on the condition of anonymity said 30 dead bodies were brought to the hospital this morning with 22 injured persons.

"I also learnt that some dead bodies and other injured persons were taken to other neighbouring hospitals for treatment," he said.

Despite the presence of security operatives, most villagers have already deserted the community for fear of more attacks by the herdsmen who were said to have made the area an attack centre in recent times.

However, Police Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Police Command, Mr. Ebere Amaraizu, who informed THISDAY that the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Nwodibo Ekechukwu, led other officers and men to the area, said the total number of casualties could not be ascertained as of the time of filing this report.

Amaraizu, said the situation in the community had been brought under control.

"We moved in to ensure that the situation did not degenerate beyond control and right now everything is under control. The Commissioner of Police is there with other officers and men and the area is being secured. We can't give the total number of casualties yet, it is when the operation is concluded that we will collate figures and give a definite number," Amaraizu said.

Many members of the Ukpabi Nimbo community, who are mostly farmers, have their homes around their farmlands. The herdsmen did not spare their houses, as well as farms and crops as they were all destroyed.

ThisDay checks learnt that the herdsmen had previously fallen out with the villagers over their grazing activities in the community.

Sources in the community disclosed that the villagers had been resisting the use of their farmlands as grazing fields by the herdsmen.

It was equally learnt that the situation further degenerated after some herdsmen who operate in Ukpabi Nimbo and other communities in the Uzo-Uwani area claimed that their cows were missing.

There were also claims by the herdsmen that some of their colleagues were killed in the area.

The villagers alleged that most of the herdsmen that were involved in yesterday attack were 'imported' from Nasarawa State by other Fulani herdsmen who were already operating in Enugu.

It was gathered that, before the herdsmen struck, there was tension in Ukpabi Nimo and other communities in the Uzo-Uwani area over widespread rumour that about 500 herdsmen were mobilising to attack them.

It was learnt that the villagers, in anticipation of an imminent attack by herdsmen, had alerted the Enugu State Government, and the leadership of the Enugu State Police Command. However, nothing was put on ground to forestall the attack.

The Chairman, Transition Committee, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Cornell Onwubuya, who was said to have informed the state governor, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, and the police commissioner, Nwodibo Ekechukwu, of the fears nursed by villagers, also met the

leadership of the Hausa-Fulani community in the area over the matter.

The rumoured planned attack by 500 herdsmen was the subject of an emergency stakeholders meeting in the Uzo-Uwani area council during the weekend, barely 48 hours before the herdsmen struck and literally sacked the community.

The meeting, reportedly, also deliberated on incessant herdsmen-related problems in the area, including several cases of murder, kidnappings and rape recorded in the recent past. At the meeting, Onwubuya, chairman of the Uzo-Uwani local council, was said to have informed them that some leaders of the Hausa-Fulani community had confirmed the rumoured plan by the herdsmen to launch an attack in the area.

Also at the said emergency stakeholders meeting, leaders of the Hausa-Fulani community in Enugu reportedly assured that they would take urgent steps to avert the planned attack.

It could be recalled that Governor Ugwuanyi had recently held meeting with the fulani herdsmen operating in the state in ways of checking their constant disagreements with their host communities. The meeting came shortly after 70 villagers were whisked to Umuahia, Abia State, from Ugwuneshi community in Awgu Local Government Area, after equally having an issue with herdsmen. Also recently, the herdsmen attacked the Abi village, another community in Uzo-Uwani council.

Additional information from Uzo-Uwani council revealed that the Christ Holy Catholic Church, Odozi-Obodo, at Onu-Eke, Nimbo, in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State was burnt in the early hours attack.