

Again, Herdsmen Kill 17 in Benue

George Okoh in Makurdi

Herdsmen at the early hours of yesterday killed 17 people in Ebete, at Usha Ward in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

Attacks by the herdsmen on Agatu in 2016 and the killing of over 300 persons had led to a global outcry.

THISDAY gathered that the attack on Agatu people started about 1 am when the people were asleep.

According to an eyewitness, Mr. Daddy Seni, whose father was also killed alongside his siblings, he left his father at Ebete, while heading to Aloko for fishing, when he received a call from his father, asking him to turn back that he has been shot by Fulani herdsmen.

Seni said on reaching where his father was lying on his pool of blood, he decided to take him to the hospital but that his father told him: "My son, don't bother about me and your siblings again; ours have finished; we can't

survive these gunshots; run for your dear life to tell others about this."

He said his father gave up the ghost.

Seni also narrated the incident to Agatu LG Council Chairman, Mr. Alhaji Oyigocho, who rushed to Ebete with some council members alongside security men.

He told the council boss that he heard the killers speaking Fulani language while trying to run from the scene as he (Seni the deceased's son) hid himself in the bush.

He said that among the 17 persons that were murdered by herdsmen, three were Jukum hunters who were hunting animals, while two of the hunters, who didn't die immediately but sustained bullet wounds, were rushed to a nearby hospital.

Reacting to the incident, Oyigocho appealed to the government to quickly come to their aid. "This is happening at a time Nigerians



Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Buratai

are preparing to elect their new leaders in this Saturday elections," he said, adding: "If the situation continues, it will disorganise so many things."

He said his people had never taken laws into their hands despite provocations from herdsmen whom he said had taken over farmlands in most parts of Agatu land.

Oyigocho urged Agatu sons and daughters to remain calm to allow the law enforcement agencies to carry out their duties effectively.

He was accompanied to the scene by the Agatu LG Council Secretary, Mr. Abdul Abdullahi; his Special Adviser on Security and Political Matters, Mr. Edwin Eheda, among other council members and security agents.

The state government confirmed the incident yesterday in a statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the Benue State Government, Mr. Terver Akase.

In the statement, the Governor, Dr. Samuel Ortom, was said to have met with the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Omololu Bishi, who also confirmed the attack by herdsmen.

"We feel that this is unfortunate, because the governor has raised the alarm that some persons for political reasons are planning to unleash armed herdsmen on innocent Benue

people, to create fear in the people for political gains. This is quite unfortunate and is condemnable," the government said.

It condemned the attack and urged security agencies to immediately move in to forestall further attacks on innocent people.

In his reaction to the incident, the Commander of Operation Whirl Stroke, Maj. Gen. Adeyemi Yekini, said: "I received a report this afternoon that some people were killed in Agatu by suspected armed bandits. I am not sure of the number of casualties yet but I don't think it is up to 17."

He said the special military operation has sent a patrol team to the general area where the incident happened.

"The location where it happened, although is in Benue State can better be accessed through Loko in Nasarawa State. We are already sending a patrol team there to verify what really happened," he added.

WE CAN'T DISOBEY BUHARI'S ORDER, BURATAI TELLS ATIKU

the military.

The president had told his All Progressives Congress (APC) party leaders at a meeting on Monday that he had asked the military and the police to

last night in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Mr. Kola Ologbondiyan, warning the army chief not to drag the troops into politics.

Buratai, who spoke at

Buratai told the officers: "I wish to first remind all of you that the unity of Nigeria is not negotiable. Hence those who seek to undermine our democracy by interfering in

would be no military escort for any politician, warning soldiers to stay clear of retired military officers, especially those who are now politicians until after the elections.

process as an aberration of laws and a recipe for crisis.

The main opposition party said that Buratai should concentrate on his very demanding assignment

of elections.

It also counselled Buhari and Buratai to end their rationalising military option, as the courts have summarily dismissed their arguments