

13 Killed, over 22,000 Displaced in Fulani, Irigwe Bloody Clash in Plateau

● Over 200 houses burnt

Seriki Adinoyi in Jos

No fewer than 13 persons have been killed in bloody clashes between Fulani militias and Irigwe youths in some communities in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Also, over 20 others reportedly sustained fatal injuries and had been receiving treatment in hospitals, while as about 22,000 have been displaced.

THISDAY further gathered that during the clash, over 200 houses were burnt in the affected communities, which include Zanwrah, Kpatenvien and Kpachudu among others.

Confirming the clash on Sunday, National President of the Irigwe Development Association, Mr. Ezekiel Bini said, Over 22,000 of my people have been displaced following the violence, which started on Saturday night at about 8pm and lasted till about 3am on Sunday.

He said the assailants, who organised themselves in groups equally destroyed crops and looted household items belonging to the natives before setting their houses on fire.

"Our people are in pains following yesterday's attack by Fulani gunmen in some of our communities including Zanwrah, Kpachudu and Kpatenvien. What we have is a humanitarian crisis in Irigwe land", Bini lamented.

He said, "So far, we have

counted seven people that were killed during the attacks and nine people, who sustained gunshot injuries.

"As we speak, 275 houses were burnt down and over 22,000 people displaced including women, children and the aged. Some of the displaced persons are currently taking refuge in neighbouring communities in Miango district, while many others have relocated to Jos for safety."

But state Chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Mr. Nura Muhammad, has blamed the Irigwe youths for the continued violence in the area.

He said six Fulani also lost their lives during the clash, which according to him the Irigwe youths started, adding that 11 of his people had been hospitalised as a result.

Describing the situation as critical, Muhammad said, "What happened yesterday was that the Irigwe people mobilized their kinsmen and attacked our people in Rafin Bwauna village, a settlement mainly occupied by the Muslims, Hausa and Fulani. We tried as much as possible to inform the security but to no avail.

"We are still compiling the names of those killed, but for now, we lost about six of our people, while 11 persons are in various hospitals."

"We in Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria

condemn in totality, the recent happenings in Bassa LGA. We see it as tit-for-tat madness. We are calling on the government and the security agents to rise up to the challenge before the situation gets out of hand."

Meanwhile, the lawmaker representing the Irigwe/Rukuba constituency in the state House of Assembly, Mr. Musa Agah described the situation as terrible.

He alleged that the attacks by gunmen were a conspiracy by Fulani herdsmen to exterminate his people from their ancestral lands.

According to Agah, "What is baffling is that these attacks and killings are happening within the community hosting the headquarters of 3rd Armoured Division of the Nigerian Army. How do you explain attacks that lasted for over four hours without the presence of any security to stop the gunmen?"

"You can imagine the conspiracy as the gunmen eventually killed at least seven persons and set over 200 houses ablaze. We are at the mercy of God. Our people have held several peace meetings with herdsmen but it appears that the meetings were of no use, because each time there is security meeting either at the state or local government level, the next thing you hear is another attack."

"As a member of the Plateau State House of Assembly, I have severally drawn attention of the

House to what is happening in my constituency, but our powers have been limited due to the failure of the executive arm to act according. During our recent plenary, I moved a motion of urgent public importance on the need to stop the carnage going on in Bassa and we summoned the Commander of Operation Rainbow and other security agents, including the Permanent Secretary, Security.

"They all came with the exception of the Permanent Secretary, Security, and we have scheduled another meeting to hold tomorrow (Monday) before the latest ugly attack on our people last night."

But the spokesman of the Plateau State Police Command, Mr. Gabriel Ubah said only four persons were killed and fifty houses burnt during the violence, adding also that normalcy had returned to the communities.

In a press statement he said, "On 31/07/2021, the Command received a report that there was a conflict between gunmen suspected to be Fulani Militia and youths from Irigwe at Jebbu-Miango, Bassa LGA of Plateau State.

"Unfortunately, fifty houses were torched and four natives were also shot dead. Upon receipt of the report, the tactical team of the Command was immediately deployed to the scene to tighten the security of the area and to restore peace.