

Benue Community Raises the Alarm over Killing of 50 Persons by Herdsmen

● *Seeks Buhari's intervention* ● *Military: Crisis requires holistic approach*

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

Farming communities in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State at the weekend raised the alarm over the killing of 50 farmers by marauding herdsmen.

The community had following the development, called on President Muhammadu Buhari to come to the rescue of the victims of violence in the area.

In an open letter to Buhari titled, "Terror Attacks on Farming Communities, Including Women and Children in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State," a copy of which was made available to THISDAY in Abuja, the community leaders called on the president to deploy security forces to the area to contain the terrorist herdsmen.

The letter, which was co-signed by the trio of Festus Iorkyaa, President-Turan Development Association (TUDA); Eric Tyohemba Udu and Solomon Terfa Jijah on behalf of members of the organisation, said the herdsmen killed over 50 people in an attack that lasted 10 days unchallenged.

"We write to report recent, sustained terror attacks on our communities over the past 10 days which have resulted in over 50 people dead, several injured, thousands displaced and loss of property and farmlands," it stated. The groups said the marauding

herders with cattle numbering over 300 were said to have taken over the whole of Nyiev-ya (Mbakyor Ward, Turan) in Kwande LGA, Benue state, covering a distance of not less than 100km.

Turan is the ancestral home of the Tiv ethnic group with Jato-Aka in Kwande LGA of Benue State as the headquarters.

The herdsmen were said to have destroyed villages, markets such as Ayuluba in Ityuluv Nyiev-ya, farm produce, houses and many other property worth billions of naira.

The letter cited eyewitness accounts that showed that the attackers came in with over 300 cattle, armed with highly sophisticated weapons, terrorising the people of the area and killing unarmed civilians, women and children while destroying homes, food stores and farmlands.

"In some cases, they have taken over the lands and settled on them. They come in good numbers with their cattle, destroying farm produce for their animals to graze, chase away the inhabitants of such areas and pitch their tents there," the letter read.

The community leaders also released the names of some of the victims killed so far in Turan and their respective districts by the invading herdsmen.

They include, Abande Njoor, Iorhnm, Sqrter, Abraham Terna,

Aker Shagba Achuna from Iyon Anyura Bemshima Tyurugh,

Kendon Tyover, omguga Tyodoo, Ajoh Iorhemba, Orshio Msughter, Abe Nyam, Aker Ushahembas, Ayagwa Lunen, Apav Terhile, Jirbee Amaku, Aza Bem, Ahil Wende and Iormumbes Ashi Shimave."

It listed others to include, Terhemba Madom, Andyar Aemberga, Kuntu Igba, Tarkper Adomko, Jirbee Amaku and Terlumun Swen.

"In Kendev-ya, the nmm, Terna Udam, Atighir Aondokula, Terfa Mbagbar, Terver Mbagbar, Terzungwe Chagh, Tyoazua Aondona, Kogh Aondowase, Akura Utoo, Iortsor Shaapera, Awuhe Terhemmen, Lase Mbanengen.

From Barakur district (Nyiev-Tiev) we have Kuku Temgu, Kuku Mzehemen, Hangeuir Iorwuese Kuta, among others.

"These killings and destruction of lives and properties occur on a daily basis", the community said.

The community called on the government and non-governmental organisations to come to their aid.

The Tiv community appealed to government to, "secure their lives, land and properties" and urged the president to "assist in giving relief materials to the refugees of the affected crisis, create IDP camps as people are homeless."

"This is because we are approaching the rainfall in our areas

and refuges are sleeping outside, if rain resumes the dilemma will be unbearable".

The Benue communities called on the federal government to "arrest and prosecute these terrorists. Ensure investigations to fish out the masterminds of these attacks speedily. Arrest and prosecute those funding and planning these attacks. Strengthen security for the affected communities.

"Provide urgent humanitarian support to displaced persons from affected communities who have now taken refuge in neighbouring communities most notably, in Jato-Aka in Kwande LGA.

"We look forward to your speedy intervention as you carry out your constitutional duty as commander-in-chief of Nigerian Armed Forces and call on you to use your good office to secure Kwande and in effect, secure Nigeria. Please be assured of our highest regards", it said.

Speaking on the killings in Benue, the Director, Defence Media Operation (DMO), Maj Gen Musa Danmadani, described the security situation as a "lingering issue" which are "mostly reprisal attacks."

While calling on all stakeholders to join hands to stop what he called a "cycle of violence," Danmadani said the military alone cannot end the crisis.