

Nasarawa: Death Toll In Fulani/Koro Crisis Rises To 18

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No fewer than 18 people have so far lost their lives in the hostility between some Fulani herdsmen and Koro farmers in the Jenkwe area of Nasarawa State, as the crisis, which broke out in the community last Friday, continued to fester.

Some unidentified gunmen had freely attacked residents of Duduguru town and its environs in Jenkwe, thus compelling people in the villages to flee their areas for fear of more attacks.

Witnesses in Koro alleged that the terrorists were Fulani, all dressed in black garbs, each reportedly carrying sophisticated weapons, while they carried out series of attacks in Duduguru and neighbouring villages of Musher, Buba, Gidinye and Shupe. They reportedly killed 18 persons in the process and also set ablaze houses and vehicles while also burning down several heaps of yams.

Saturday Tribune learnt that the incident, which started about three days ago, compelled residents to flee from their various houses to take refuge in Lafia, the state capital, thus heightening fear in the entire state.

When Saturday Tribune visited affected communities, corpses were seen littering the environment, just as the heaps of yams burnt by the arsonists including the burnt houses and thatched roof were a common sight.

The incident had, therefore, prompted the Nasarawa State governor, Alhaji Umaru Tanko Al-Makura, to break from his official duties to visit the trouble spots, just as he held emergency security meetings with heads of operatives in the state last Thursday.

Expressing shock on the gory sights during his visit to the affected areas, Al'Makura urged the people to remain calm and embrace peace, stating that the state government would not relent in its efforts towards protecting the lives of the people and their property.

He noted that of all the skirmishes that have taken place along border communities, none had been as devastating as that of Duduguru and its environs, just as he debunked reports that the masterminds of the crises were Fulani herdsmen.

He attributed the incident to the handiwork of those he described as undesirable elements whom he said were all out to tarnish the image of his government, noting also that the involvement of the national and state leaders of Fulani group, the Miyeti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, in the quelling of the crisis meant that the Fulani could not have been responsible.

He, however, warned the people against peddling rumours capable of causing tension in the state, just as he called on the residents to remain in their homes instead of fleeing in apprehension to areas they were not familiar with. He said the state government would make sure that a combined team of the army and mobile police would be deployed to the area in order to restore peace.

Responding, Wuduyanba Samuel Agidi, administrator of Jenkwe Development Area, traced the genesis of the conflict to series of events, including a mere argument involving a Fulani boy and tax collectors who he said beat up the boy severely and the killing of another Fulani man by the natives, which resulted in mutual distrust and suspicion between the natives and Fulani herdsmen.

Emmanuel Aloko, a graduate of Business Administration, who spoke to Saturday Tribune said he went to Duduguru his hometown to pick his credentials only for him to fall victim of the attack.

"The men, numbering about thirty, all dressed in black and carrying dangerous weapons, attacked our

village. While running into the bush to save our lives, the attackers shot at us. I saw more than 10 dead bodies on our way back. The attackers are not all Fulani men as there are people from our area in the group.”

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