

Benue killings: Plateau community indicts police

By Taye Obateru

JOS—THE Aliade community in Plateau State has cried out over last

weekend's killings in their native land in Benue State which they said left about 10 people dead, accusing the mobile police force of carrying out a massacre in the town.

The people have therefore called on President Olusegun Obasanjo to declare a state of emergency in the state as well as institute a probe into the actions of the police in what it called the "Aliade Massacre."

Their spokesman, Dr. Tor Iorapuu of the University of Jos at a press conference in Jos yesterday also urged civil society organizations, local and international human rights groups and others "to investigate the gross human rights violations in Benue, particularly the recent carnage in Aliade with a view to bringing the culprits to justice."

He expressed regrets over circumstances leading to the crisis which arose as a result of the alleged dumping of the winner of the state assembly congress for the area for another aspirant which the people resisted. He lamented that one of those killed was his nephew whom he said was shot while making a call at a call centre during a visit from Abuja.

According to Iorapuu, "it is a tragedy and rather unfortunate that in a seemingly democratic moment people are politically disenfranchised, their voices brutally suppressed through the instrument of the state. This case in Aliade is a deliberate attempt to deepen the pains of an already marginalized people. It is like beating a child and then choking his throat from crying."

He said it was an irony that while people are being encouraged to defend their mandate, his people were being killed for doing so wondering why the Benue State Government would stoop low to dabble into an assembly primaries by wanting to change the people's choice.

Some members of the community who fled to Jos following the alleged police invasion of Aliade alleged that the people were being persecuted for voting for a candidate by those who want to impose another candidate who was runners up at the primaries. They therefore appealed to the Federal Government and other well meaning Nigerians to intervene in the matter before it gets out of hand.



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