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Benue: Ending the Fulani herdsmen's siege

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By Peter Duru

Parts of Benue State have, in the last few years, come under bloody attacks allegedly carried out by Fulani herdsmen.

Areas worst hit in the attacks, which left hundreds dead and thousands of persons displaced, were Logo, Agatu, Guma, Gwer West and Makurdi local government areas of the state.



(<http://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fulani-herdsman.jpg>)

Fulani-herdsman

Though Benue has, in the last seven weeks, recorded very few of such incidents, concerted moves have been repeatedly made by the state government to stem the bloodbath that turned the affected communities into theatres of war.

Just when there seemed to be a lull, the crisis suddenly reared its ugly head at Ayilamo and Anyii in Logo local government area where herdsmen, on separate occasions, allegedly invaded some communities, killing over 80 persons, razing property and farm lands.

Thousands of residents were also forced to flee their homes to seek refuge in neighbouring communities.

Few days ago, residents of Adeke village, a suburb in Makurdi, the state capital, were forced to scamper for safety when suspected Fulani herdsmen besieged the community, shooting sporadically for over two hours.

Sunday Vanguard learned that the invaders stormed the village at about 10:30 pm Tuesday, firing gunshots as they marched

through some streets in the area.

“The development forced many residents and parents to flee with their families, scampering through bush paths to safer areas in town”, a source said.

“Though calm returned to the community after police patrol vehicles moved there around 12midnight and still patrolling the area.”

When contacted, the state Police Commissioner, Hyacinth Dagala, said the squabble between the Tiv locals and some Fulani herdsmen in the community, Tuesday afternoon, could have led to the sporadic gunshots.

“You know there was a problem in that area between Fulanis and the Tivs yesterday (Tuesday). The police even waded into the matter but it’s likely that the attack may be because of that incident”, Dagala said.

“For now, we don’t know who is responsible but my men are already there to maintain peace and I can assure you that the place is calm now.”

Unfortunately, efforts to stem the protracted crisis between Benue farmers and the herdsmen also claimed the life of Assistant Superintendent of Police , ASP, Baba Ibrahim, who, until his death, was a member of the Task Force on Cattle Rustling and Kidnapping at the Force Headquarters, Abuja.

Ibrahim was killed by armed men in Katsina-Ala local government area of the state while on a special assignment in Benue.

Meanwhile, in a bid to end the persistent clashes, particularly in Logo local government area, Chief Terkura Suswam, under the auspices of the state government, last month, convened a peace meeting between Tiv farmers and herdsmen in the area.

The meeting culminated in the signing of a peace treaty by the feuding parties who also held a commemorative football match to seal the deal.

However, Benue State governor, Dr. Samuel Ortom, recently vowed to intensify dialogue to resolve the worsening feud.

He made the pledge when he hosted the leadership of Miyetti Allah Cattle Rearers Association of Nigeria, in Makurdi.

He assured that although he was personally affected by the crisis, he would not procure and supply arms to Benue people to retaliate the loss suffered by farmers in the crises but rather seek lasting solution by promoting dialogue between the parties.

According to the governor, ranches remained the best way to permanently tackle the challenge but noted that they were a long term measure.

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