

Herdsmen take over Gov. Ortom's home; kill 50, destroy rice farm

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BY PETER DURU

MAKURDI – Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue state, yesterday disclosed that his country home has been sacked by Fulani mercenaries who also killed over 50 of his kinsmen after which they razed over 200 hectares of his rice farm.

He lamented that the incessant killings and destruction of lives and property in the Benue had created a 25 year retrogression of development in the state.

The Governor made this known when he received the All Progressives Congress, APC Governors' Forum led by Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo state, who paid him condolence visit over the invasion of Agatu and other parts of Benue by the herdsmen.

According to him, "the mercenaries invaded my village, killed over 50 persons and destroying over 200 hectares of my rice farm. As I am sitting here, I have no ancestral home, they killed children, old men and women in my community."

"The mercenaries come to Benue not just to graze but to steal, kill and destroy the livelihood of the agrarian people after which they take possession of the land knowing fully well that all we have here are our farms."

"The truth is that these attacks have brought a major setback to the people especially with our declining revenue from the federal allocation which was about N7 billion before i assumed office but this month stood at N1.3billion while our monthly wage bill stands at close to N4billion.

The Governor lamented that even after President Buhari had directed that soldiers and mobile police men should be deployed to the state, there had not been any reports of the arrest of people behind the heinous crime.

Ortom who advocated the ranching of cows in the country, recalled that Benue people had lived peacefully with Fulani herdsmen until four years ago when the crisis started stressing that the state had not known peace since then.

Responding on behalf of his colleagues, Governor Okorocha said the documentary shown to the Governors on the invasion of Benue by herdsman was quite revealing and the killings condemnable.

He said “we are here to show solidarity and our dislike to what happened here, a criminal is a criminal whether they are Boko Haram, herdsman or whichever group; Benue state is central and key in Nigerian politics and these killings have to stop in the interest of peaceful coexistence of our people.”