

Benue: Aged woman burnt alive, 4 others killed, over 300 houses razed

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As armed Jukum youths invade Ukum community
Local council boss narrowly escape death

By Peter Duru

Makurdi— An aged woman was reportedly burnt alive in her house at Atsenga village in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State in attack allegedly carried out by armed Jukum militia from neighbouring Kente community in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State.

It was also gathered that the militia killed four other people in the attack with over 300 houses, huts and farmland razed.



Scenes of the crisis.

An eyewitness account had it that the crisis was sparked off by a minor disagreement between a young Tiv and his Jukum friend at Atsenga, which later snowballed into a major communal fight.

According to the witness, “we have been living peacefully together in the border communities of Igbongum, Vaase, Gbeji, Kente and Atsenga without any problem, but from what we heard the whole thing started as a quarrel between two young men, who are friends, a Tiv man from Benue State and his Jukum friend from Taraba State, Monday, afternoon and before anybody knew what was happening the situation got out of hand and the border community was on fire.

“From what we heard, as a result of the altercation, the Jukum young man went and mobilised his brothers, who invaded Atsenga with arms, shooting and killing anything in sight.

“They also went as far as burning down houses, cars, food barns and huts, including farmlands. In one of the burnt houses, an aged woman, one Mama Yanenge, who could not escape, was burnt alive in her house while four other persons were either hacked or shot dead by the invading armed Jukum youths.

“As we speak over 300 houses and huts have been burnt while some are still on fire. The sounds of sporadic gunshots can also still be heard from within the community while residents have all fled their homes for fear of being killed.”

Vanguard gathered that the Chairman of Ukum Local Government Area, Mr. Ibellogo Tor-Tyokaa, who visited the affected area, yesterday, to assess the situation alongside his Wukari counterpart escaped death narrowly after running into gunshots by the armed youths.

“They were rescued by the military personnel, who were drafted from Gbeji to the area to quell the crisis. It was the military that guarded and led them out of the area,” the source said.

Efforts to reach the Ukum Chairman was unsuccessful as his mobile phone was switched off.

Meanwhile, the Benue State Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Mrs. Catherine Anene, said the command was still expecting details of the crisis from the Divisional Police Office, DPO, in charge of Ukum Local Government Area.