

Killing of farmers by herdsmen: 8 corpses exhumed in Delta for investigation

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THE corpses of eight farmers reportedly killed by gunmen suspected to be herdsmen at Uwheru in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, last Friday, have been exhumed by a search team made up of police personnel and representatives of the community for investigation.

Two of the corpses were exhumed on Sunday, while six others were exhumed on Monday afternoon.

The killings also, yesterday, drew the ire of Urhobo Progress Union, UPU, which did not only frown on renewed herdsmen attacks on Uwheru villages but also urged President Muhammadu Buhari to stop the killings of the people.

These came on a day the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion, Diocese of Ogbaru, Anambra State, described Nigeria as a country at crossroads and in reverse gear without steering.

The exhumation of the victims' corpses came as the community also confirmed reports that two others killed were burnt to ashes by the herdsmen.

One of those burnt to ashes, identified as Itoje Dennis from Otor-Iyede in Isoko North local government area of Delta State, had since been taken to his hometown for burial.

President-General of the the community, Cassidy Akpedafe, and the Delta State Commissioner of Police, Hafiz Inuwa, had Sunday, disagreed on the reported killings, with the police boss claiming the killings did not happen and that some individuals in the state were using the reports to cause apprehension in the state.

"If there are any (deaths), why are their corpses being hidden from the police?" the CP had queried.

The community's President-General, however, accused the police commissioner of being economical with the truth.

Consequently, the community swiftly on Sunday afternoon, exhumed the corpses of two of those killed in the attack to prove the police wrong.

The corpses were taken to Central Hospital, Ughelli for autopsy.

When Vanguard visited the hospital morgue yesterday, the decomposing corpses of the duo were seen, with one of them burnt after he was said to have been shot dead by the assailants.

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The community president-general said: “As we speak (yesterday morning), seven persons are lying dead inside the bush and we are yet to recover their corpses.

“17 persons have been rushed to the hospital for medical treatment and I want to use this opportunity to appeal to the police not to cook up reports on this matter.”

Meanwhile, a security source from the 222 battalion, Agbarha-Otor, also confirmed yesterday that two of its men were shot during the attack.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: “Yes, two soldiers from the battalion who are stationed at Bomadi and drafted to the area sustained injuries during the incident.

“They are in stable condition and are currently receiving medical attention for injuries sustained during the incident at Bomadi General hospital.”

Stop the killings, UPU tells Buhari

Reacting to the attack yesterday, Urhobo Progress Union, UPU, frowned on renewed herdsmen attack on Uwheru villages, urging President Muhammadu Buhari to stop the genocidal killings of their people.

UPU in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Mr Abel Oshevire, said: “Reports of the renewed attacks and killings by herdsmen on Agadama town and other villages in Uwheru Kingdom of Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State, where over eight persons were brutally murdered (two of the victims were burnt alive) and many displaced from their ancestral lands, have reached the UPU Worldwide.

“We, again, call on the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Muhammadu Buhari, to stop this genocidal killings of our people in Uwheru Kingdom. We are particularly worried at the allegations that on Saturday, February 15, 2019, men in military uniform allegedly on the side of the herdsmen, were deeply involved in this recent saga and shot sporadically at harmless citizens of Agadama-Uwheru, leaving some of them dead or gravely injured.

“UPU urges the federal and military authorities to investigate this allegation, with a view to bringing the security agents and herdsmen involved in this dastardly act to book.

“As we also speak, a whole community in Uwheru, Avwon, has been taken over by these herdsmen, while all indigenes have fled the place for their lives.

“A lot of the people have become refugees in other places, families have been displaced and many who escaped the killings through the bush remain missing and unaccounted for.

“Other Uwheru communities such as Oreba, Owarovwo, Ophororo, Ohoro, Urede, among others, that constantly face attacks, or are threatened, by these herdsmen, who openly boast that they will take over these communities unchallenged, have since been witnessing mass exodus of people due to the ferocity with which these herdsmen perpetrate their gruesome activities.

“These herdsmen are known to even demand for levies and protection money from our people in Uwheru, people who are pursuing their legitimate livelihood of fishing and farming on their ancestral lands. Those who resists these demands have been known to be attacked, raped, maimed or killed by the herdsmen.

“We find it ridiculous, insulting, offensive, unacceptable, unimaginable and disgusting that strangers we took in and accommodated as part of us, and as fellow Nigerians, should turn around to become our tormentors and killers? God forbid. We will no longer condone this.

“For too long, we have chosen the path of peace which, unfortunately, has become our greatest undoing. The enemies we took in as friends, have taken us for cowards.

“Let it be made categorically clear that the Urhobo nation cannot be conquered. We are a people with a history of independence. In the prevailing circumstances, we might be forced to defend ourselves and our lands if this unprovoked harassment and killings of our people is not halted forthwith.

“The Urhobo people are peace-loving, whether at home or wherever they dwell. Therefore, we will no longer tolerate the nuisance of any unfriendly and troublesome stranger in our midst.

“We want to plead with those who own or are supporting these rampaging herdsmen to call them to order. We are saying unequivocally that the Urhobo Nation will never, ever surrender or cede an inch of her territory to any stranger, no matter the situation.

“The strangers in our land remain strangers and they must respect and obey the laws of the land. We shall no more condone these acts of unprovoked attacks on our people.

“We want to warn trouble makers in our land to toe the line of peace and be reminded that our people have the capacity to defend themselves against any invaders. We shall not be cowed or intimidated by any group of strangers in our own land. We have remained patient over the years and our patience is fast running out.”

Nigeria on reverse gear without steering — Anglican Bishop

Meanwhile, the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, Diocese of Ogbaru, Anambra State, yesterday described Nigeria as a country at crossroads, in reverse gear without steering.

Addressing newsmen at the Basilica of St James Cathedral, Atani, Ogbaru Local Government, the Bishop, Diocese of Ogbaru, Rt. Rev. Prosper Amah, said what Nigeria needed now was divine and international intervention to save it from collapse.

Bishop Amah, who expressed shock over the crumbling security situation in Nigeria, called on the Federal Government to listen to the cries of the masses by reshuffling the security apparatus in the country and make the necessary changes on the composition of service chiefs.

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“Nigeria, I must say, is gradually being consumed by insecurity, we are at crossroad, not just crossroad, but a dark one, that is in a reverse gear without steering. We do not know who is leading us now, we are confused, that is where we are now,” he said.

Bishop Amah said Nigeria’s frightening security situation has led to non-functionality of any sector in the country, adding that from the Executive, Legislature to the Judiciary, all seemed not to be working but comatose.

He added: “No sector is working in Nigeria. Judiciary seems to be gambling and is no longer independent, Legislature is now rubber-stamp and the executive is busy fighting and calling those who are criticizing it or suggesting the way forward all sorts of names, with Presidential media aides castigating whoever that has different views from theirs.

“What Nigeria needs now is divine and international intervention. God needs to intervene and then the international community must intervene in the unfolding events in Nigeria.

“Nigerians have demanded the removal of service chiefs, following the crumbling security situation of the country and instead of the government to do the needful, it is busy issuing threats to people, while their media aides are attacking anybody or any group with different views.

“The service chiefs have overstayed and Mr President must learn how to listen to the masses and not deceitful advisers by removing them. They must go before the country is finally consumed.”

CAN calls for unity among Christians

Similarly, the National President, Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Rev Peter Ayokunle, yesterday called for unity among Christians in the midst of attacks from suspected terrorists, armed bandits and other violent crimes against Christians.

He stated this in Benin City, Edo State capital, when he supervised the conduct of elections into the executive committee of the state chapter of the association which had been in crisis over the second term ambition of its chairman, Bishop Oyonnude Kure.

Represented by a National Director from the headquarters, Bishop Stephen Adegbite, who was accompanied by other national officers, including the South-South chairman of the association, Archbishop Ige Israel, Ayokunle said Christians had no option but to remain united.

He said: “The body of Christ must remain one, unity is not negotiable because God has been faithful. The leadership of CAN is always under threat but it must ensure unity because we have our members all over the country.

“We were going to Maiduguri last week with our president, but God designed it to save us. Our vehicle broke down on the road and we had to take three taxis to our destination. They (terrorists) laid ambush, expecting to see CAN vehicles and then attack, only for them to hear that we had arrived our destination.

“They killed 31 people that night for missing their target, so what else do we need than remain united and work together?”

Buhari still popular in Borno — Presidency

In a similar development, The Presidency has said President Buhari’s recent visit to Borno State showed that he was still very popular and accepted.

The President was booed by some residents of Maiduguri, while he was on a sympathy visit to Borno State, following the killing of travellers at Auno by Boko

Haram insurgents.

However, the Presidency said on Sunday night that the residents appreciated what he had done in tackling insurgency in the North-East.

Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Mr Femi Adesina, who was on Channels Television politics programme on Sunday night, said the crowd that received President Buhari was huge, stressing that the few dissenting voices didn't call for worry.

"We don't see it as a rejection; if you look at those who came to welcome the President from the airport to the palace of the Shehu of Borno, it was a huge crowd.

"Some 90 to 95 per cent were waving brooms and welcomed the President; some dissenting voices in a large crowd like that do not call for worry, its normal in a democracy.

"The President really, is still very accepted, still very popular and the people of Borno know what he has done; they appreciate what he has done in terms of tackling the insurgency," he stated.

On the war on insurgency, Mr Adesina explained that President Buhari was concerned because he took an oath to protect lives and property in the country.

"There may be some reversals of the gains made, but then those gains can always be made again.

"The President should be worried, he took an oath to protect the country so if we see lives and property being lost wantonly, the President must be concerned and he is," Adesina said.

President Buhari had expressed surprise that Boko Haram insurgents have continued to launch attacks on communities, despite the huge budgets expended on the counter-insurgency operations in the North-East.

According to the President, operations against the insurgents will not be successful if the people do not cooperate with the military and other security agencies.

We need to unite to address our challenges — Lawan

President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan, has said for Nigeria to surmount the challenges bedeviling it, all leaders in the country must as a matter of urgency, come together to ensure that the security and welfare needs of the people are adequately met.

According to Lawan, Nigeria is at a point where the provision of infrastructure alone by government cannot sufficiently address the underlying cause of growing insecurity and illiteracy in the country.

The Senate President made this known in a speech delivered at the 60th birthday celebration of Governor Nasir El-rufai and Presentation of the book “These Times: Selected Writings and Speeches by Nasir El-rufai” in Kaduna on Monday.

“Those of us in leadership positions, we know what we need to do. We need to have the courage and commitment and sustain them.

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“Nigeria is at a crossroads, and more than ever now require the unity of the people. The issues bedeviling Nigeria today requires that all leaders, at all levels and in all parts of Nigeria need to come together.

“What we need is not only infrastructure, but we need the capacity building of the people. In this part of the country, this report has been consistent and apparently, little has been done to reverse it”, the Senate President lamented.

Lawan, therefore, called on the Federal Government to immediately introduce policies that would return the over thirteen million (13m) out-of-school-children back to school, so as to curb the rising number of illiteracy in Nigeria.

The Senate President said the report of 13 million or 14 million out-of-school children mostly in the north is dangerous for the country.

“Until we are able to reverse this kind of trend, no matter how much infrastructure you put, you will still have that social angle that will actually lead to serious insecurity, the kind that we experience or even worse, God forbid. So, we need to look at the people.”

The Senate President further admonished leaders in the country to live up to the responsibilities of their respective offices by demonstrating courage and acting expeditiously to guarantee the protection of lives and properties of citizens.

“Today, we are challenged by insecurity, sadly it is all over the country. This requires that all of us at every level of government come together and work to ensure that lives and properties of citizens are protected.

“The story is bad, everyday it is either kidnapping, assassination or some kind of banditry that leaves our people and communities shattered and destroyed.”