

BIRTHDAY: Governors AbdulRasak AbdulRahman of Kwara State (left) and Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State (right), celebrating President Muhammadu Buhari's birthday inside the presidential jet on their way back to Nigeria from United States, yesterday.



Many feared dead as herdsmen invade Enugu community

• Gunmen set court ablaze in Imo, second incident in 24 hours • Suspected kidnappers shoot Ebonyi Assembly commission member dead in Anambra • Wanted gunman apprehended

By Chioma Gabriel, Editor, Special Features & Nwabueze Okonkwo

SUSPECTED FULANI herdsmen and collaborators from Agala community in Benue State yesterday, attacked Ebor community in Eha-Amufu, Isi-Uzo local government area of Enugu State.

A yet-to-be-ascertained number of people were killed during the latest attack. The attack at Eha-Amufu happened as the magistrate court in Owerri, capital of Imo State was set ablaze by gunmen yesterday.

In a related development, a Commissioner in Ebonyi State House of Assembly Commission, Leonard Chibuzor Alegu has been shot dead in Anambra by suspected kidnappers.

The incident, it was gathered, occurred between 9 and 10 p.m. on Saturday at Umunya community in Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State. The deceased was allegedly travelling from Abakaliki to Onitsha to attend a child dedication in Onitsha when the incident occurred.

Meantime, members of a local vigilante have arrested a notorious gunman, Chukwuma Ejionye, in Ezinifite, Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The native of Awo, Ezinifite in Nnewi South has been linked to different attacks in Ezinifite and the entire Nnewi South.

Many feared dead in Enugu community

The attack in Eha-Amufu happened barely eight days

after assailants attacked the community and killed 25 people. The attack forced residents of Mgbuji, Umuijovu, and Ebor communities to flee their homes.

Subsequently, businesses were forced to shut down in Eha-Amufu, the third-largest town in Enugu.

A security source lamented Sunday's attack and the negligence of the state government to tackle the problem once and for all.

The source said: "These assailants have sacked over 40 villages and settlements. Now, they are attacking the hometowns. This is the harvesting period and people have been forced out of their homes and communities and the government is paying lip service to this. These people are coming from communities in Benue State and the government is aware of it."

"The invaders who outnumbered the soldiers and vigilantes, launched another attack on Ebor community this Sunday morning. I have seen bodies of less than 10 but I can't give a specific figure right now."

"We are still in the bushes combing and searching for more people killed. What is happening here is unfortunate. It is exactly what they did to the Benue State people. Probably, they want to create a vast land joining Benue communities they had already sacked and call it their land."

"From the report I received, the armed herdsmen and their collaborators from Benue State communities launched the attack around 5:30 am to 6 am this morning. Before we got there, several people had been killed. We are few soldiers here and where

we are based is a little bit far from the communities. There are no other security operatives from other security agencies here in Eha-Amufu except local vigilantes. They (vigilantes) first engaged them but the invading armed herdsmen outnumbered them," the source added.

A community leader, who gave his name as Ogbuor Samuel, confirmed the attack.

"As I am speaking to you, the invading armed herdsmen are still shooting. Several people have been killed. At least, we have recovered the bodies of 10 people killed. The chairman of Isi-Uzo local government is playing politics with our lives. He didn't want to tell the governor the facts of what is happening in these communities. He is not supporting the local vigilantes and other local security."

"A few weeks ago, he dissolved all the local vigilantes formed by Eha-Amufu communities, yet he hardly visits the affected communities. We need the government to declare a state of emergency on security in Eha-Amufu, especially in Ebor, Umuijovu, Mgbuji, and Agumede communities. Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi should do something drastic. His government should stop politicizing the situation in our place."

"They should stop fabricating stories that our people are collaborators. That is a fallacy and it diverts attention from the real issues. Agala people in Benue State have joined forces with armed Fulani herdsmen to continue to kill and destroy our people. That is the situation. Since these recent attacks started in October, we haven't seen policemen here. You can only see the police if their commissioner is coming to witness the destruction and go back to Enugu to dish out false

narratives.

"Where are the tactical squads and operational assets of the police he told Nigerians through the media that he had deployed."

"We want to know, who are the security agencies in Enugu State protecting their interest? Could it be that the security chiefs in Enugu State are in the state to give cover to armed herdsmen?"

It was earlier reported that in the last two years, starting from January 2021 till date, no fewer than 120 people had been reportedly killed by criminals suspected to be Fulani herdsmen in Eha-Amufu.

"Meanwhile, the state police command has confirmed the recent attack but did not give the casualty figure."

The command's spokesman, DSP Daniel Ndukwe, told journalists in Enugu that the 'sketchy report at my disposal shows that there was an attack. But the assailants were repelled by a joint police and army team that is currently

trailing them," he added.

3 Gunmen set court ablaze in Imo, second incident in 24 hours

The gunmen attack did not record any casualty. Michael Abattam, Imo Police Spokesperson, did not respond to calls or messages when contacted on the incident.

The development came hours after a similar incident happened in Orlu on Saturday when the high court in Orlu LGA of Imo State was set ablaze by gunmen.

The burning of the courts came amidst several attacks in Imo over the past months, which have resulted in killings, abductions, and destruction of property.

On Friday, gunmen killed Christopher Eleghu, the candidate of the Labour Party (LP) for Onitsha constituency in the Imo State House of Assembly.

On December 12, gunmen attacked the head office of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, in Owerri, the Imo capital.

The gunmen attacked the INEC building with locally-made explosives, but the police officers stationed at the office were said to have confronted the gunmen, killing three persons in the process.

A section of the INEC facility in Owerri was, however, razed.

Suspected kidnappers shoot Ebonyi Assembly commission member dead in Anambra

It was further gathered that the deceased allegedly stopped at Umunya, along the Enugu-Onitsha Expressway to ease himself when the suspected kidnappers accosted him and in the process of struggling to escape from being kidnapped, the suspects allegedly shot him in the stomach and made away with his vehicle, phone and phones of other occupants of his vehicle who were accompanying him to Onitsha.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, PPPO, DSP Tochukwu Ikenga could not confirm the incident as at press

time because according to him, such an information was yet to reach the command.

Chairman of Abakaliki Lawyers Association, Victor Alo told newsmen on phone that the deceased was rushed to Immaculate Heart Hospital, Umudioka where he was confirmed dead.

Alo who is a legal practitioner based at Nkpor, near Onitsha, also told newsmen that the body of the deceased has been deposited at a nearby mortuary at Awkuzu, adding that they have reported the case at Oyi Divisional Police Headquarters at Nteje.

He therefore tasked Anambra State police command to endeavour to fish out the perpetrators of the dastardly act within a reasonable space of time.

Wanted gunman apprehended in Anambra

Confessing to carrying out attacks in the area, Ejionye said: "I was in Unubi camp before I moved to Ezinifite, before going to Agulezechukwu, where I stayed with other members. Then, later, I now left the group and escaped to stay on my own."

The suspect has long been on the wanted list of Joint Security Forces working in the state.

Also listing some of the attacks the suspect has allegedly carried out, one of those present at where he was paraded, said: "He is a known kidnapper who has been responsible for the killing of security men, including vigilante men."

"He kidnapped a prominent man and collected N1.5 million before setting him free, but unfortunately for the man, he was dumped in a place where he broke his lungs and has been under treatment since then."

"JTF has visited his house and recovered guns and security uniforms which he used when he was a security man (he worked as a vigilante operative)."

"He has been on the wanted list for a long time and has been one of the reasons Ezinifite and Nnewi South were regarded as being highly unsafe."

"We got a tip-off last night and we moved in and apprehended him where he was hiding."

2023: Why next President must come from S-East —Anglican Bishop

By Dayo Johnson

AKURE—THE 91-year-old Retired Anglican Bishop of Akure Diocese, in Ondo State, Rev Emmanuel Bolanle Gbonigi, weekend, adduced reasons why the next president must come from the South East.

Gbonigi said in a statement in Akure, the Ondo State capital, that he was adding his voice to "those who are convinced that our next president should come from the southeast political zone of our country."

"My reason for this is more than political and human philosophy. It is because of divine will. The God who created heaven and earth has a number of attributes. The most important of the attributes are divinity, holiness, righteousness, justice, love, mercy, peace and prosperity."

"The most relevant of these attributes to the topic of where

our next president should come from is justice. God is God of justice."

"He wills or desires that everyone of the people He created should have his or her share of what He has given to all His people."

"Therefore, God certainly wills that every part of our country Nigeria should have the joy of seeing one of them serving as President of our country."

"The one and only geopolitical area of our country that has not enjoyed this gift of God is the southeast geographical zone. The Yoruba say it's the food shared by all in a party that's sweet: 'ajije ni undun'. They also say you eat and I eat make the food palatable: 'je ki unje n'dun'."

"Another Yoruba saying is that a well fed dog cannot play as a friend with a hungry one: 'Aja ti o yo kii ba eyi ti ko yo sere. So, we see that, the Yorubas carry the will of God

their Creator in their culture and tradition. I am sure that the other tribes or nations of Nigeria also do."

"I appeal to you my fellow Nigerians, whatever your profession or occupation: teachers, farmers, civil servants, politicians or others to please reflect the attributes of God."

"Politicians in particular must copy God's attribute of justice. God is the God of justice. He is just in all His relationship with human beings and God expects you as a politician to practice justice in all your relationships with other people."

The clergyman said that: "Justice is the prerogative of peace. It means that without justice, there can be no peace and without peace, there can be no prosperity."

Gbonigi added: "So, let us practise justice in every facet of our political lives. The same is true in all other areas of our national life"