

Nigeria: Insecurity Worsens - Herdsmen Kill 144 in Plateau, Benue in 14 Days



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Gunmen in Nigeria (file photo).

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Makurdi — No fewer than 144 persons have been killed by herdsmen in the two north central states of Plateau and Benue states in the last two weeks, as the blood-letting continued late Tuesday, with the killing of at least 13 persons, while scores of others sustained injuries, with over 50 houses razed.

Recall that within the period, 104 persons, comprising 52 in Bassa local government area and another 52 in Bokkos LGA of Plateau State, were killed by the marauding herdsmen, while at least 40 were also killed in Benue State.

In Benue, three persons were killed on April 3 when a Benue Links bus was ambushed at Ikobi community in Otukpo Local Government Area, LGA, while on April 10, two farmers were murdered by the marauders in Gwer West LGA.

Same day, three persons were killed at Mbasombo community also in Gwer East LGA, while the latest attack on Otobi Akpa in Otukpo LGA and the boundary with Nasarawa State claimed the lives of at least 13 persons, with several others declared missing.

Aside from the killings in the north central states, Boko Haram insurgents also on Tuesday, attacked Adamawa communities in Hong local government area, killing seven persons, while scores of others are still missing.

The latest killings in Benue on Tuesday evening, came as Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State yesterday announced prohibition of night grazing, transportation of cattle by vehicles after 7:00 pm, and restriction of the use of motorcycles from 7:00 pm to 6:00 am across the state until further notice, as part of measures to ward off the marauding herdsmen.

The attack on Otobi Akpa community started at about 6:00pm from the popular Otobi junction when over 20 armed herdsmen in a commando style, shot sporadically at anybody they sighted.

TheY also set ablaze no fewer than 50 houses.

Unfortunately most the of the vigilantes who could have stopped them from entering the main town to perpetrate their mission, had moved to Adim village of Akpa to attend a burial.

The terrifying sounds of gunshots created palpable fear as many took to their heels, while others who were curious to know what was happening ran into the herdsmen who opened fire on them, killing at least 13 persons in the process, while many escaped with gunshot wounds.

Some other victims were butchered with cutlasses, with their brains scattered around the scenes they were killed.

Investigation revealed that the killer herdsmen invaded Otobi Akpa and other Akpa communities to resist the law against open grazing which stopped them from grazing their cattle in the area.

One of the elders of the community, Adikwu Ogbe, who lamented the attack, recalled that Otobi Akpa community was one of the most peaceful communities in Idoma land, noting that in the past, the community had lived peacefully with Fulani herders until recently when they (herders) started bearing sophisticated arms and threatening the locals.

Recall that about three weeks ago, a security guard with Otukpo dam was shot and dismembered by herdsmen who enter Otobi village and shot sporadically in a night attack.

At the time of filing this report, many residents were seen fleeing the community, while search for those missing was in progress.

There was also no sign of security presence in the affected areas.

Benue State Deputy Governor, Samuel Ode, in company of heavily armed security operatives, yesterday visited the area to sympathise with many of the residents who are currently taking refuge at the Federal Government College, Otobi.

He appealed to them to remain calm, assuring that measures were being put in place to end further attack by the killers herdsmen.

Meanwhile, the community has become a ghost town as virtually everyone has fled the area for fear of another attack.