



NIGERIA: THE GATHERING STORM

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1. Benue State

Below is an unedited version of the latest report from the Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace:

UPDATE ON THE HERDERS ATTACK ON CHRISTIAN FARMERS

Incident Report: In Udayagba, Daudu, Guma Local Government

Dates of Attack: 26th & 27th October, 2023

Time of Attack: Approximately 5PM and 10AM

Number of Victims: 3

Year of Attacks: October, 2023 – Till Date

Location of Attack: Udayagba, Daudu, Guma LGA, Benue State

Overview:

This report is based on the incident that led to the speculated road block along Makurdi/Lafia Road on the 26th and 27th of October, 2023 respectively. It was confirmed that there was no road block by the herdsmen but that the armed herdsmen were positioned on the highway and shooting at anyone on sight. The military personnel along the area created the road block to prevent indigenes from getting into the shots being fired.

Details of Incident:

Thursday 26th October, 2023



The armed herdsmen attacked Mr. Kwaghaondo Ornguga and his wife Mrs. Nyikwase Ornguga on their farm in the evening at 5pm in Udayagba off Daudu Road along Makurdi/Lafia Highway; the herdsmen macheted the woman and the husband started running upon sighting the brutality done to his wife.

He ran into a deserted village but on his arrival met a mad man in the village who started asking him questions; the armed herdsmen came after them, shot and killed the both of them. The woman laid unconscious when found, but was taken to the hospital and is alive, currently undergoing treatment at the Benue State teaching Hospital (BSTH).



FRIDAY 27th October, 2023

In the morning of the said date, Mr. Edwin Ochoyoda was riding on a bike along Makurdi/Lafia highway at Udayagba off Daudu Road in Guma LGA; was met by armed herdsmen firing shots along the road and he was shot and killed in the process.

Found on him was a Benue State University ID Card bearing the above stated name.

Concluding Remarks:

The brutality of the attack serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges faced by the indigenous people of Benue State at the hands of armed herdsmen. As the people of Daudu and Guma Local Government by extension scuffle with the profound loss of their loved ones, we fervently advocate for swift and resolute action highlighting the pressing need for swift intervention and justice.

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2. Other reports



Armed gunmen attacked a police station in Otukpo, Benue state on Friday 20 October. This attack resulted in 14 people dead, of which at least three were police officers. Agaba Idabi, a local resident who saw the attack, says about 10 men in hoodies, riding in 4x4s, rode into the police station compound at around 3Pm on that Friday. The gunmen then went straight to the office of Homeland Defense after the police station and shot two members of the local community vigilante group. Their next stop was the CBD of Otukpo. On arriving in the CBD, they sacked four banks: Access, Stanbic, United Bank for Africa and zenith banks. "When they drove into the place where the banks were located, the gunmen started shooting at the cars that were parked in front of the banks, and people started running up and down," he says. Another witness, Odeh Anyorpe, says that the gunmen were shooting randomly into the air,

and also at those scurrying away. He says the group continued their ransacking for nearly an hour before any intervention from security forces. "From what I saw, about seven people were killed at the UBA, two at Zenith bank, and two at Stanbic IBTC, while about three people were killed at the Divisional Police Headquarters in Otukpo." After their escapade, the gang travelled towards Makurdi, where they exchanged gunfire with members of the Nigerian Army. Traditional leader of Otukpo, Chief John Eimonye, says they will hunt them and find them, with both the Nigerian police and the Nigerian army in pursuit. "After robbing the banks, they headed towards Makurdi, but I can assure you that the security personnel, including soldiers and the police, are giving them a hot chase as I speak with you. So, they will certainly not escape." <https://truthnigeria.com/2023/10/gunmen-kill-8-persons-including-3-police-officers-as-otukpo-witnesses-deadliest-violence/>



More than 153 people have been killed since May in Benue state. These deaths have been blamed on Islamic herdsmen, or Fulani herdsmen. This is according to the Foundation of Justice, Development and Peace, located in the state capital, Makurdi. Some 520 people were killed between January and June of 2023. The latest reported attacks were on October 17 and 18, which claimed at least 15 lives on the outskirts of Makurdi. An IDP camp was targeted near the Benue-Nasarawa border on 18 October, leading to the death

of 3 people. In a statement authorized by Bishop Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe, the late evening attack in Uikpam took place after another attack that led to the deaths of nine IDPs in two communities in nearby Logo and Gwer West counties. Four IDPs were killed when they were farming yam and corn from their allotments on 17 October. On the same day, in Avilamo and Mahango communities, gunmen attacked IDP camps hosting about 15000 people and killed at least 5 people. Ms. Blessing Ortseega, a survivor of one the attacks, shared her experience, telling of how the group murdered her mother and sister in front of her on 2 October. "We were weeding our yam farm around 12:30pm three weeks ago and all of a sudden, many Fulani people with guns and machetes surrounded us. We all started to run, but my mother and sister- who was seven months pregnant- could not go far. They cut my mother several times with the machete before shooting her. They cut my sister's belly and removed her baby. They killed my sister's belly and removed her baby. They killed the baby and left my sister for dead. She died two days later at the hospital. All the while I was running and screaming but no one could come to our aid." Mr. Iorgbuusu Bem, another survivor who lives in the IDP camps, says he was attacked with three of his friends when he was coming back from a nearby town where they went to look for food. "They killed my friend and shot me on the arm. We were returning from Naka, riding on the same bike. Just as we approached one hill, a little after a village called Tse Awunah, we saw a man dressed in black jump out in front of us with a gun. He started shooting at us and hit all of us causing us to crash few meters away." This attack happened less than 600 meters away from a military checkpoint in Agagbe, a town hosting 15000 IDPs, but they were not able to get assistance from local security forces, even though they were close to them. local mayor, Nyibiam Nicholas, also says the soldiers are not assisting them as residents. "They are collecting money from the Fulani to compromise during attacks. Our people pay them extra allowances to protect them. but when the Fulani give them more money, they turn a blind eye during attacks and sometimes you see them protecting the Fulani instead." Representative Ojemota Ojotu says many people are fleeing, "thousands of people have fled their homes and farms in recent times. There are several communities especially around the Benue boundary with Kogi state that are completely empty due to growing threats by herdsmen. The herdsmen have gone

back and destroyed their houses and farms. These people are helpless and hopeless, and the attacks are not stopping.” <https://truthnigeria.com/2023/10/in-nigerias-breadbasket-terrorists-halt-farming-target-starving-idps/>



Three individuals have been killed by armed herdsmen in an ambush on Makurdi-Lafia road in Guma Local Government Area, Benue state. A local resident says that the attackers waited on the highway, looking for victims. “On the first day which was Thursday evening, the armed herdsmen come out to the Makurdi-Lafia road near where you have the NYSC far and shot three persons. Two of the victims died on the spot but the third person who sustained serious injuries survived and he was rushed to the hospital for treatment. After that,

they came and took over the road again Friday morning and shot some other people. One of the victims died but others survived. We are scared that they might take over the road again on Saturday if security is not beefed up around that axis. Those killed were not travelers on the busy road. But they might be targeting travelers on that busy road. Recently these armed herdsmen seemed to have become emboldened and are attacking communities around that axis and those in Gwer West LGA of the state.” Security secretary of Guma LGA, Mr. Christopher Waku confirms that 3 people were killed, and that the attackers waited in ambush for two days. “The armed herdsmen stood on the Daudu-Ortese road. They killed two persons yesterday Thursday, at about 5pm and injured one person who is receiving treatment at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital. Today Friday in the morning they killed one person. All together, they killed three people. And the persons they killed were the locals.”

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/armed-herdsmen-lay-ambush-on-makurdi-lafia-road-kill-3-injure-others/>



Fr Thaddeus Tarhembe, parish priest of St Ann’s Catholic Church, Sarkin Kudu, was abducted by gunmen, but was released on 30 October. He was taken on 29 October. Fr Tarhembe was taken from the priest’s residence. Fr John Jerome, communications director of Wukari diocese, says the priest was released late on 30 October. “With our hearts full of joy and thanksgiving, we wish to inform the general public that Very Rev Fr Thaddeus Tarhembe, a priest of the catholic diocese of Wukari, who was kidnapped in the early hours of Sunday, 29 October 2023, in his parish residence of St Ann’s, Sarkin Kudu, has regained his freedom. He was released by his abductors yesterday, Monday 30th October 2023, in the late hours of the day. The bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Wukari, Most Rev Mark Nzukwein, on behalf of the priests, religious and laity of the diocese,

thanks and appreciates you all for your prayers and solidarity in this trying moment in the life of our young diocese.

May the good lord bestow his blessings upon you and your families.” <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/9491/diocese-announces-release-of-catholic-priest-kidnapped-in-attack-on-nigerian-parish>

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/monarch-catholic-priest-4-others-abducted-in-zamfara-taraba-2/>



Police Public Relations Officer, Benue State Police Command, SP Catherine Anene

<https://punchng.com/suspected-herders-kill-police-pros-cousins-in-benue/>

This past Sunday, suspected terrorists attacked communities in Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue State, and killed at least 7 people. Three of those killed are relatives of police spokesperson, Catherine Anene, who usually is the person who has to confirm these types of incidents on behalf of the police. “That is my village, three of my cousins were killed and that is the total number (from my family),” she confirmed. A local resident also confirmed the incident, saying, “Four people were killed at Tse Gamber in the Sengev Council Ward while three others were killed at camp Nagi in the Mbachohon Council Ward located along Naka-Agagbe Road.” [https://punchng.com/suspected-herders-kill-](https://punchng.com/suspected-herders-kill-police-pros-cousins-in-benue/)