

Second Wave of Attacks Near Jos, Nigeria Leaves 13 Christians Dead

Less than two weeks after a massive attack in Nigeria that killed 500 Christians, Muslim Fulani herdsmen on Wednesday unleashed more horrific violence on two Christian villages in Plateau state, killing 13 people, including a pregnant woman and children.

In attacks presumably over disputed property but with a level of violence characteristic of jihadist method and motive, men in military camouflage and others in customary clothing also burned 20 houses in Byei and Baten villages, in the Riyom Local Government Area of the state, about 29 miles from the state capital, Jos.

Christians in neighboring villages are living in fear of possible attacks by the herdsmen, who have not been deterred by the joint military and police security team enforcing curfew in the state. The ethnic Berom Christians, who live as farmers, have long faced off with Fulani nomads who graze their cattle on the Beroms' land.

The slaughter comes after a similar attack on March 7 on Dogo Nahawa, Zot and Rastat, three villages in Jos South and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas where hundreds of villagers were struck with machetes and burned to death.

"The assailants armed with dangerous weapons attacked the two communities simultaneously at about 1 a.m. on Wednesday, March 17," Brig. Gen. Donald Oji said in a press statement, adding that timely deployment of troops averted further carnage. "Seven of the assailants have been arrested, while troops are still on the trail of more of them. Items recovered from the assailants include three locally made short guns with

cartridges, bow and arrows, machetes, knives and cutlasses.”

State Gov. Jonah Jang condemned the killings, alleging that some unnamed persons were fueling misunderstanding among communities in conflict. Because the style of killing is typical of jihadist fundamentalists, Christian leaders suspect Islamic extremists are encouraging the attacks, throwing religious gas on low-burning land and ethnic conflicts.

Dalyop Nyango Mandung, a survivor of the attack whose 90-year-old mother, Ngo Hwo Dongo, was killed in her room, told newsmen that the villagers were awakened by gunshots from the Muslim herdsman who were barricading their houses. Mandung, however, distinguished the assailants in military fatigues from the Fulani herders.

“We saw them in military uniforms, about two of them were in military uniform and the Fulani were in their normal clothes,” Mandun reportedly said. “My mother was the only one killed in the family.”

Another survivor, Kachollom Pam Dauda, who is pregnant, told Nigerian media that she was lucky to have escaped the killers. She also described the men in military uniform as distinct from the herders, saying, “The killers came and first shot, and the Fulani were machete-ing people.”

“I climbed the roof of the house and held to the wood,” she reportedly said. “It was painful more so that I am pregnant. I saw the killers kill my two sisters-in-law, Chundung and Kangyang – they could not escape. I saw as they were being butchered and slain.”

Dauda said she dared not make any movement that would attract the attention of the killers.

“After they killed my sisters-in-law, they sat at the back of our house and were saying they would still come back in two days to finish us in the village,” she reportedly said. “I saw

two soldiers. They were speaking English and were saying, "Come let's go." The Fulanis were more than 20 in number. When they left, my husband's uncle, Yohanna, came crying saying, 'They have killed people in the next compound.'

In the March 7 attack, the ethnic Berom victims also included many women and children killed with machetes by rampaging Fulani herdsman. About 75 houses were burned. State Information Commissioner Gregory Yenlong confirmed that about 500 persons were killed in the attacks.

Christian leaders said that in the March 7 attack, eyewitnesses said the Fulani Muslims were chanting "*Allah Akbar*" as they broke into homes and slashed men, women and children.

Gov. Jang said word of the new attacks challenged everyone's strength to endure.

"It gets to a stage when one remains strong, but when you receive the news of fresh attacks, you get broken before you recover again," he said. "I have total faith in God because I am a child of God; and because I know there is nothing that happens that God is not aware particularly when it happens to His children. I have talked to God that whatever sin we have committed on the Plateau He should have mercy on us."