

The Armed Fulani Herdsmen Crisis in Uromi

How Complicity and Vested Interests Enable Continued Killings Across Nigeria

— By Dr. Ross Erazele Agazuma —

The persistent killings perpetrated by armed Fulani herdsmen have escalated into one of Nigeria's gravest security crises. Behind these attacks lies a disturbing web of complicity involving the Nigerian government, security forces, corrupt politicians, and powerful northern elites, all beneficiaries of a lucrative livestock economy. This toxic combination of economic interests, political influence, and state-backed impunity is fueling the unending violence and bloodshed experienced across Nigeria, particularly in the Middle Belt and Southern states.

Economic Interests Behind the Silence: At the heart of the crisis lies the enormous economic interest northern political elites hold in cattle and livestock businesses. Many members of the National Assembly, influential northern politicians, and their affiliates have significant investments in cattle breeding, ranching, and livestock trading. Consequently, armed Fulani herders, used as protectors of their vast cattle herds, have become untouchable, emboldened by the backing of influential political godfathers who shield them from prosecution. Because of these vested interests, when killings occur, there is often deliberate silence from government officials and politicians. Rarely does the federal government or the security forces condemn attacks by armed herders. However, if victims try to defend themselves and a herdsman is killed, there is an immediate uproar from northern elites, lawmakers, and even security institutions, creating a clear double standard and amplifying existing tensions.

Edo State: A Case of Complicity and Neglect: The recent incidents in Edo State provide a stark illustration of this pattern of complicity. Before the deadly events in Uromi, the federal government, acting through the APC-led state government, strategically dismantled local vigilante groups that had previously protected communities from attacks. Shortly afterward, heavily armed Fulani herdsmen invaded various communities across Edo State, killing farmers, market women, and other innocent citizens. Despite these attacks and the victims' appeals for help, the federal authorities, security agencies, and northern political elites remained conspicuously silent. However, following the defensive actions taken by the people of Uromi, who successfully confronted armed herdsmen in a clear case of self-defense, the narrative was suddenly

manipulated. The federal government, alongside certain complicit media houses, began painting the Fulani attackers as innocent hunters who had been unjustly killed. This false narrative has been propagated to justify potential reprisal

The unchecked violence by armed Fulani herdsmen, backed by political complicity and economic interests, is rapidly destabilizing Nigeria. If the federal government continues its selective silence and complicity, the Nigerian state risks unraveling completely. It is now incumbent on civil society, independent media, and conscientious leaders across all regions to push vigorously for accountability and justice. The tragedy of Edo State, particularly Uromi, is a microcosm of what Nigeria faces nationwide. The killings will persist as long as powerful political elites place economic interests above the lives of ordinary Nigerians. Only when Nigerians across ethnic, religious, and regional divides stand united to demand an end to impunity, violence, and complicity will genuine peace and security become achievable. The government must act decisively now. Continuing to ignore or silently support these killings will only invite more violence, potentially plunging the nation into deeper crisis. Nigerian lives matter, and it is the government's fundamental duty to protect all its citizens, regardless of tribal or political affiliation. Silence is complicity; complicity is criminal. It is time for accountability, justice, and genuine peace in Nigeria



victims include farmers who contribute immensely to the agricultural economy, market women who sustain community livelihoods, and children—the future of the nation. Ignoring their plight while vocally defending armed aggressors only serves to deepen ethnic and regional tensions, posing a serious threat to national unity and stability. The government's duty is to protect all Nigerians without bias, not shield criminals because of their tribal affiliation or economic ties.

Recommendations for Ending the Violence: To halt this dangerous trajectory and end the killings, several urgent steps must be taken: Immediate and Transparent Prosecution: Arrested herders involved in violent attacks must face public and transparent prosecution, ending the culture of impunity and sending a strong signal that violence will no longer be tolerated. Community-Based Security Networks: Restore and empower local vigilante groups, under state regulation, to complement national security efforts. Communities must have credible defenses to fill gaps left by

attacks against the local communities.

Manipulation of Narratives by the Government and Media:

The deliberate distortion of facts regarding the Uromi incident is especially troubling. Evidence clearly showed that the Fulani attackers were heavily armed and moved in Dangote trucks, systematically traveling from one vulnerable location to another within Edo State. Weapons and ammunition were discovered in their possession, an undeniable proof that their intention was far from innocent hunting. Despite this evidence, certain media houses, influenced or manipulated by political forces, quickly spread misinformation that portrayed the Fulani herders as innocent victims rather than heavily armed assailants. This dishonest narrative provides justification for further violence and exposes local communities to renewed attacks.

Why Vigilante Justice Prevails: Lack of Trust in Security Forces:

A significant reason why communities resort to self-defense measures, often referred to as vigilante or jungle justice, is the widespread distrust of Nigerian security agencies. Repeatedly, victims of Fulani attacks report that arrested perpetrators handed over to the police or military soon resurface in their communities, unpunished and emboldened. This chronic lack of accountability reinforces a dangerous cycle of violence and mistrust, discouraging victims from seeking justice through official channels.

The recent events in Uromi underscore precisely why citizens now hesitate to involve the police or army. Community members, having witnessed multiple failed attempts to seek justice through legal and security institutions, have resorted to direct self-defense as their last recourse.

Who Are the Real Victims? While the government selectively condemns the killing of armed herders, it has consistently failed to recognize or address the true victims of these relentless attacks: the thousands of innocent Nigerian citizens. The

compromised federal security agencies. Expose Political Beneficiaries: Full disclosure of political elites, lawmakers, and security officials involved in cattle and livestock businesses should be mandated. Transparency would dismantle hidden economic incentives driving this violence.

Responsible Media Reporting: Media houses must commit to honest reporting and reject manipulative government narratives. Responsible journalism is essential in preventing further violence and misinformation. **Ban on Open Grazing and Enforcement of Law:** Strictly enforce the ban on open grazing and prosecute illegal arms bearers, dismantling the capability of armed herdsman to terrorize communities.

The unchecked violence by armed Fulani herdsman, backed by political complicity and economic interests, is rapidly destabilizing Nigeria. If the federal government continues its selective silence and complicity, the Nigerian state risks unraveling completely. It is now incumbent on civil society, independent media, and conscientious leaders across all regions to push vigorously for accountability and justice. The tragedy of Edo State, particularly Uromi, is a microcosm of what Nigeria faces nationwide. The killings will persist as long as powerful political elites place economic interests above the lives of ordinary Nigerians. Only when Nigerians across ethnic, religious, and regional divides stand united to demand an end to impunity, violence, and complicity will genuine peace and security become achievable. The government must act decisively now. Continuing to ignore or silently support these killings will only invite more violence, potentially plunging the nation into deeper crisis. Nigerian lives matter, and it is the government's fundamental duty to protect all its citizens, regardless of tribal or political affiliation. Silence is complicity; complicity is criminal. It is time for accountability, justice, and genuine peace in Nigeria

. Dr. Ross Erazale Agazuma is a Political Economist and Governance Advocate