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Six Die In Makurdi Cult Clash

From Simeon Nwakaudu, Makurdi

A VIOLENT cult clash yesterday broke out in Wadata area of Makurdi, Benue State. About six youths feared dead in the crisis

This occurred amid intense joint military and police patrol in the last one week to prevent an outbreak of violence in the area,

The crisis, which started in the evening of Thursday was characterised by mass exchange of gunfire by two rival cult groups, startling other residents of the area who fled for safety.

The gang war took place around Wadata Police Barrack, Ihugh Street, Rice Mill Road and by the bank of River Benue. Though the reason of the clash could not be immediately ascertained, some residents said that it might not be unconnected with the fight for supremacy between two major cult groups in the suburb.

One of the slain youths was identified to The Guardian simply as Umar, said to be a son of a security operative working in Jos, Plateau State. A police patrol van reportedly took Umar's body from the scene of the shooting at Ihugh Street on Thursday evening to the Federal Medical Centre, Makurdi where it was deposited at the morgue.

Yesterday morning, the clash was still raging in the area, with several women and children displaced. Parents stopped their children from going to schools hit down by stray bullets.

When The Guardian visited the area, gunshots were still being heard from the riverside where the heaviest fighting was taking place between the cult groups. However, police patrol teams were on the major Benue Crescent blaring siren.

Contacted, the Police Commissioner, Ibrahim Mohammed confirmed the incident. He said an initial attempt by operatives of his command to round up the cult members was scuttled by a mistake by another security group that started the blaring of siren.

Mohammed said he could not confirm the level of casualty since he was just returning from Abuja and promised to brief the media as soon as he received detailed information from his lieutenants.

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