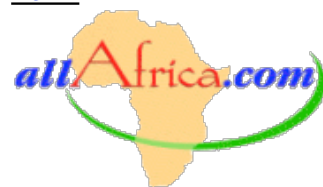


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Iniobong Ekponta

25 October 2011

Uyo — No fewer than 20 people are feared killed in communal clashes in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

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According to eyewitnesses, property worth several millions of Naira including houses, vehicles and livestock, were either looted or destroyed during the crisis.

Several victims of the violence have taken refuge in churches and police stations in Ini and the neighbouring Ikono and Ikot Ekpene Local Government Areas.

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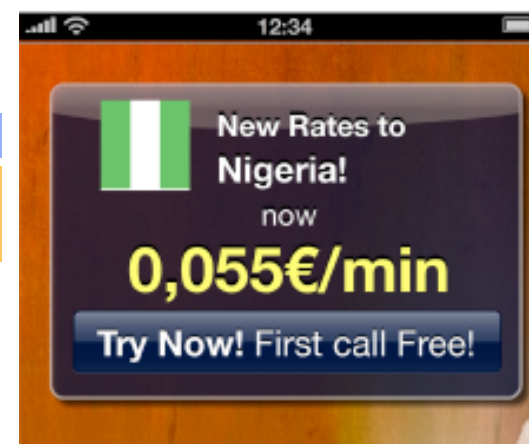
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The Moment learnt the violence occurred in Nkari clan over a disputed marshland under serious contention by the people of Mbente on one hand and those of Ikot Offiong, Ikot Akpan and Ubienkene on the other.

Worst affected by the violence are Ikot Offiong, Ikot Akpan and Ubienkene villages where several houses were torched.

When The Moment visited the three villages which were completely deserted as the residents fled and took refuge in forests and neighbouring communities.

The immediate past councillor in the area, Nya John, said he hurriedly cut short his visit to

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Abuja, as his phones were inundated with calls on the mayhem.

He called on the security agencies and government to investigate the matter with a view to bringing the perpetrators to book.

According to Edet Akpan Okon, a community leader in the area, 'the crisis had been there for a long time and it was only a war waiting to be ignited.

'We have written several letters to constituted authorities including security agencies on the threat posed to us by the Mbente people, to no avail'.

He alleged that Mbete people hired mercenaries from Ikot Umo Essien and Abam, to inflict violence on the community.

Meanwhile, calm has returned to the area as the Commissioner of Police, Solomon Arase, has drafted Policemen from Ikot Ekpene, Ikono, Ini and the police headquarters at Ikot Akpanabia, to restore order.

Arase, who inspected the ruins at the weekend, has reassured citizens of their safety and urged the people to go about their normal businesses without fear.

He said the police is on top of the situation and would stop at nothing to fish out the hoodlums and their sponsors.

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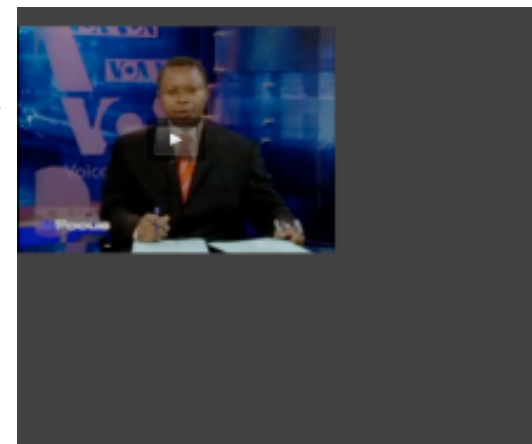
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