

Traditional ruler missing over communal clash

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The communal crisis in Kwale, headquarters of Ndokwa West Council Area of Delta State has taken a new dimension as the traditional ruler of Utagba-Ogbe, Obi Isaac Nze-Uku has been declared missing.

Soldiers and more mobile policemen, including regular police officers, have been drafted to the area to curtail the lingering crisis, which has led to the burning of several houses.

The monarch was declared missing since Monday after his palace was set ablaze by militant youths suspected to be members of the Adege Progressive Union.

The whereabouts of the royal father, the Oduosa of Utagba-Ogbe, Obi Isaac Nze-Uku and several young people from different families remained unknown.

Also the oldest man in Utagba-Ogbe, the Okpala-Uku, and Pa Oloku Onoh, who survived Monday's invasion on the community, said there would be no reconciliation with the APA

and their sponsors in government, saying that the crisis had started since June 11.

Onah, 90, surrounded by community youths who were guarding him, said that he could still identify the man who shot at him during the mayhem, adding that the APA youths and their alleged backers in government.

"Everybody except the kids knew that the Majority Leader in the state House of Assembly, who represents the area, Evangelist Ossai Ossai, was behind the problem that had plagued the community,"

he lamented.

Reports say that tension rose in Umusadage, Utagba-Ogbe on Tuesday as sporadic gunshots rented the air from traditional hunters and members of a community vigilance group that kept vigil to prevent a another attack on the community.

Residents of Kwale, who witnessed the arson and invasion, said the assailants were armed with sophisticated weapons. "It was a terrible day. They did not come to loot, but they had military rifles, the type that never stops

firing (automatic rifles). We all ran away when they came", a shop owner told newsmen in Kwale.

The resident added that the attackers came in a Peugeot 504 estate wagon with PDP boldly written on it, corroborating the account of the oldest man in Utagba-Ogbe, that a prominent politician was behind the attack.

Reacting on Tuesday, Ossai said his detractors were out to link him with the violence that led to the burning of several houses in Umusadage, including his family home.

"Since the crisis started, there have been a lot of insinuations over my involvement in the said unhealthy development. My detractors have continued to link me with a particular group in spite of the fact that I have nothing to do with the group," he said.

Ossai said his investigations as the legislator representing the area (Ndokwa West) has shown that some influential people were behind the protracted violence and had provided arms and ammunition to hoodlums to cause mayhem in the area.