

1 killed, 17 detained over police, youths clash

CAJETAN MMUTA, Asaba

ONE person has been confirmed dead while 17 others are being detained by police in Delta state following a clash between youths and police in Abavo Ika North -East council area of the state.

Already, members of Abavo community have raised alarm over alleged indiscriminate harassment and threat to their lives by officers of the state command who the indigenes say have for several weeks swooped on them while most of them now sleep in the bush for fear of further arrest. Among those detained by police include two 12-year-old primary school boys and a palace chief of the community, the Nadiobi of Abavo, who was sent by the Obi of the community, His Royal Highness, Obi Agu Uche Urenima,

To the divisional police station in the area to solicit the release of those arrested by police.

However the windscreen of a police anti crime patrol team van was smashed in the process while official uniform of some of the police officers were torn into shreds by the rampaging youths.

Daily *Champion* investigation revealed that indigenes of the area had complained of undue harassment and arrest in the evening hours by policemen attached to the division who on various occasions have mounted road blocks along roads leading to the community's farm lands.

Source close to the community said that despite the complaints on

the police excesses, the matter failed on deaf ears even as those nabbed were meant to pay heavily before they could regain their freedom.

According to the source who pleaded anonymity, police raided a barbing salon about 8pm Monday where some boys had gone to recharge their GSM handset batteries due to frequent power outage in the town. Police then descended on them and arrested some of their colleagues prompting the youths to regroup the next morning blocking all entry points.

But unable to bear the unsafe situation and fear, youths of the community had on February 16 engaged policemen in the area in a fierce clash following the arrest of four of them in a barbing salon. In the wake of the confusion, the angry youths mobilized against the police who on their part reinforced their men that led to the arrest of the 18, some of who sustained serious injuries. Sixteen of those arrested were charged to court while one is still in detention. The Police Public Relations Officer of the command.

Miss Olabisi Okuwobi when contacted confirmed the incident but said there was no actual clash between police and youths in the community but pointed out that those arrested were found smoking Indian hemp in the morning on the fateful day. She said those nabbed would soon be charged to court for disrupting police from carrying out their lawful duties and for attacking and damaging police vehicle.