

Cult war: 15 killed in Imo

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OVER 15 people were feared killed and 50 others wounded in Awara, Ohaji/Egbe Local Government Area, Imo State, at the weekend in what the state police command described as rival cult clashes.

The crisis which started last last Thursday rose to a crescendo on Saturday, with the killing of many. The incident which has posed great puzzle to both security agencies and the government has forced many residents of the area to seek refuge in neighbouring communities, particularly Asaa.

While the police command said the killers invaded Awara from Rivers State, unconfirmed report said the crisis started

when indigenes of Awara rose against a criminal from the area who reportedly escaped and mobilized his gang members to attack the community.

Speaker of House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Goodluck Opiah an indigene of the area visited the scene yesterday and regretted the incident. His chief press secretary, Kelechi Mejuobi who spoke to *Daily Champion*, said the Speaker regretted the incident.

He promised to report his findings to the government for appropriate action. State Commissioner for Information and Strategy Hon. Chuma Nnaji, when contacted yesterday, told *Daily Champion* that he was returning to Owerri from his village.

Police commissioner Mr. Innocent Ilozuoke, however said that only nine persons were killed but added that his men have taken control of the situation. He said a rival cult group invaded Awara which shares borders with Rivers State and ran back to their hide outs after perpetrating the dastardly act.

He said his men were in firm control of the situation and will remain there for some time to ensure that people from the area coming back for Christmas were not molested.

Meanwhile, there was palpable fear in Owerri and environs over possible escalation of the crisis following the recent Jos crisis. Well armed mobile police men have been deployed to