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Edo: 33 die in auto crash, communal feud

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ABOUT 33 people were feared dead at the weekend in an auto crash and communal violence in Edo State.

An 18-seater Toyota Hiace bus reportedly plunged into Ovia River near Okada junction on the Benin-Ore expressway.

The accident occurred barely 24 hours after 60 passengers were burnt to death in a crash involving a luxury bus and a diesel tanker at Ekpoma on Benin-Auchi road.

However, during the latest

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accident, efforts by other motorists and local divers to rescue trapped passengers and driver were unsuccessful as they lacked needed equipment to pull the bus out of the river.

According to an eye witness who pleaded anonymity, the rescue team watched in disbelief as nobody could render help to the drowned people.

The source said that nobody including the driver was able to escape from the Benin bound vehicle at the time of filing this report.

Benin Zonal Commander of the FRSC, Mr. Zakari Nda, confirmed the accident saying that his men were already at the scene on a rescue mission.

However, he did not

confirm the casualty figure saying he had not been briefed by his commander on the ground.

Investigation revealed that the driver of the ill-fated vehicle was heading towards Benin from Ore when it suddenly plunged into the river thereby leading to the death of the passengers and driver inside.

Meanwhile, 15 persons were killed and 25 others sustained various degrees of injuries at Iyakpi, South Ibie in the Etsako West local government council of Edo state weekend following the renewed hostility among the warring ruling houses in the town over a lingering chieftaincy tussle.

Besides the casualty figure which hospital source had continued to increase every hour, scores of persons are said to be missing while many residents of the community were seen yesterday relocating out of the area to the neighboring towns of Auchi, Aviele and Jattu, even as normalcy has not been restored in the area.

Investigation revealed that the communal war was between two cousins Messrs. Kelvin Danesi and Obebe Umoru over who should occupy the throne of Aidonogie of South Ibie.

The chieftaincy dispute has been on for over 10 years and was temporarily resolved following the intervention of eminent groups like Ibie Peace Forum based in Lagos in 2007.

However, the fragile peace in the area was ruptured few months ago following the decision of the Governor Adams Oshiomhole-led government recognize Mr. Kelvin Danesi as the ruler of the clan.

South Ibie shares boundary with Auchi headquarters of Etsako West local government area and had been enmeshed in prolonged chieftaincy tussle in the past few years during which several houses were razed down and unspecified

number of persons killed.

In the latest escalated crisis, eye witness said apart from the human loss, several houses and other valuable property belonging to both parties in the dispute were destroyed by the rampaging armed youths acting on behalf of either of the principal actors in the tussle.

According to an eyewitness account, several houses and property worth millions of Naira were also destroyed during the clash between opposing supporters of the two principal actors in the crisis.

According to the source, the resumed violence which began last Saturday, continued till yesterday and had not abated at the time of filing the report.

Though the actual cause of the renewed war could not be ascertained as at press time, report indicated that it may not be unconnected with the planned 10 years anniversary by Kelvin Danesi.

The anniversary preparation was said to have angered a group loyal to Obebe Umoru.

Confirming the incident yesterday, the Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of operations in the Edo State police command, Mr. Clement Adoda, said that the situation had been brought under control and urged residents of the community to relax.

According to him, the Edo State police command had deployed riot policemen and the men of the Police Area Command in Auchi to the community.

Reacting to the situation, Edo State Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Mr. Abdul Oroh, condemned the bloody clash and warned them against taking laws into their hands.

He urged the people to shun violence saying that any aggrieved person should seek legal redress and warned against break down of law and order.

beat in 2010 —Obi

"I have only one problem with the people of Anambra State who voted me: To continue to work for them. How I wish you were here. I am on duty and I tell you when I come into the office in the morning, I don't even notice anybody, I just notice the people of Anambra State, I need water.

There is so much responsibility that I don't even know whether a commissioner was with me or against me. I was not elected to be looking at people's faces, to know those who are with me and against me.

"I am elected to take care of 5 million Anambrarians and that is what I do. The state does not belong to Peter Obi, it is not about Peter Obi, it is about the future of the society in which the children of this state will live in. So I have to do it honestly and faithfully."

However, Obi said the 2010 governorship election is not a do-or-die affair" adding that people of the state will insist on a free and fair election.

"My being the next governor of Anambra State will depend on my relationship with God and the people.

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