

Tiv/Fulani clashes claim two in Makurdi

Contributed by Hir Joseph, Makurdi
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Two days of violent clashes between Tiv peasants and Fulani herdsmen has claimed no fewer than two lives at Orkpe, a rural community along the River Benue in Makurdi, the Benue State capital.

This is coming on the heels of efforts by Governor Gabriel Tor-Suswam, the Tiv paramount ruler (Tor Tiv), Dr. Alfred Akawe Torkula and the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar to end the incessant clashes between the two ethnic groups. The three have been meeting between Makurdi and Sokoto to fine tune a lasting solution to the incessant clashes between Tivs and Fulani herdsmen in the state. Fighting began Friday at noon between a handful of persons on both sides, but by Saturday, the entire community was brought in as youths who bore various forms of arms including sophisticated fire arms engaged in the clash that saw dozens fleeing to the city. Governor Suswam's Special Adviser on Security Matters, Col. Benjamin Aboho confirmed the clash when Daily Trust met him at the scene of the incidence yesterday where he was trying to broker peace between the rival groups. Col. Aboho however declined to state the cause of the crisis since, according to him, the state government needed time to dig into the cause. "What we are doing now is to try and reconcile the two brothers. We are working with the police and the traditional institution to fish out those behind this. It is from then that we will be able to find out the cause. Now we are more interested to see that the crisis does not continue", Aboho said. The security adviser also said the state government was aware that two persons were killed. Daily Trust inquiries at the village showed that trouble started Friday when some Tiv youths attempted to force some Fulani youths out of a dam which they (Tivs) have been using as the only source of drinking water. The kindred head of the Mbashir-Mbaku where Orkpe village is part of, Chief Emberga Kyagh who led the Tiv community to the peace meeting with the security adviser refused to comment. However, members of Orkpe village who sought not to be mentioned in print told Daily Trust the Fulani herdsmen on return from grazing, entered and took their bath in the dam. They added that the Fulanis also drove their cattle straight into the only source of drinking water, a development which according to them, provoked them into attempting to force them out. They said the minor misunderstanding ended in a clash that lasted two days and claimed some lives. The police commissioner in the state, Mr. Kayode Ibiyinka confirmed this when he told Daily Trust on phone that "our report says Fulanis polluted a dam, the only source of drinking water". The police commissioner however said "only one person was killed". When Daily Trust visited the troubled village, the security adviser was still meeting with the community at the LGEA Primary School, Orkpe. He sounded a warning to the community and insisted that the perpetrators be named so that the state government would hand them over to the police for prosecution.