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5 die in fresh Jukun/Kuteb fracas



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TARABA STATE

Despite the prevalent Christmas spirit of love and brotherhood at the weekend, another round of hostilities erupted between the Jukun and Kuteb communities of southern Taraba state, leading to the death of five people.

Consequently, the military barracks located in Takum, headquarters of Takum local government area, where the two rival tribes are predominantly found, is now playing host to thousands of refugees who have relocated there for safety following the outbreak of fighting.

Although details were still sketchy at press time, Daily Trust checks show that trouble started when a group of Jukun youths got dressed in traditional attire in an attempt to stage their annual Puje festival.

Apparently reminded of the fact that their own festival, the Kuchicheb, was prevented from being staged last year due to government's ban on cultural festivals in the troubled area, Kuteb youths were said to have protested against the staging of the Puje festival by the Jukuns.

This development, Daily Trust gathered, triggered fierce fighting between the rival youth groups, leading to tension in Takum and neighbouring Ussa local government areas as well as the newly created Yantu Special Development Area Council.

In the ensuing fracas, scores of residents of Takum fled to the military and Police barracks in Takum town while others were said to have fled to neighbouring local government areas. Although there was no official confirmation of casualty figure at press time, Daily Trust gathered that at least five people were killed while several houses were set ablaze.

By yesterday morning, a truckload of armed mobile policemen from Jalingo was drafted to Takum to beef up security in the area. Both the Chairman of Takum local government council, Musa Ahijo and the Taraba State Police Public Relations Officer, Solomon Isa, confirmed the outbreak of crisis in Takum but declined comments on the casualty figure.

Daily Trust checks further show that on Boxing Day, following security reports of possible outbreak of crisis, Takum Council Chairman Musa Ahijo convened a security meeting during which he reminded stakeholders of the ban on cultural festivals in the area.

It would be recalled that early this year, the Jukun and their Kuteb neighbours were at daggers drawn over an attempt by the Kuteb to observe their annual Kuchicheb festival, which banned by the state government.

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