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Nigeria: Bama Youths Burn Police Station

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Maiduguri — Irate youths demanding that the Divisional Police Headquarters in Bama Local Government Area of Borno State hands over to them some detained Fulani men ended up burning the police station yesterday. They also set ablaze seven vehicles and over 30 motorcycles parked within the station. The police in turn opened fire at the rioters and killed three of them.

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Daily Trust gathered that the youths had converged at the police station asking for two Fulani boys who were said to have killed another town resident during a fight on Wednesday. Suspecting that the youths intended to lynch the suspects, the police refused to hand them over and pleaded with the protesters to allow the law to take its course.

The trouble had started on Wednesday evening, Daily Trust learnt, when the Fulani men fought another male resident in a bush somewhere near Bama. In the course of the fight, the man was allegedly hit with a sharp axe and he slumped and died. A report was lodged at the Divisional Police Station, following which the DPO deployed policemen who arrested the two suspects at about 11pm on Wednesday and detained them at the police station.

While the suspects were in custody, some youths believed to be made up of friends and relations of the deceased thronged the station early yesterday and demanded that the two suspects be released to them. The police insisted that it was investigating the matter and would charge the two men to court, but the youths insisted on having them killed. Arguments and counter arguments ensued, resulting in a fierce battle between the youths and policemen. The rioters almost overpowered the policemen, as they destroyed the station and nearly everything around it. The policemen fought back with tear gas and live bullets. Three people were shot dead while many others sustained injuries.

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The PPRO said the police was out to ensure maintenance of law and order in Bama and the entire Borno state. He called on residents not to attempt to take laws into their hands. It was not clear if there were any more arrests after yesterday's ugly riots.

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Yesterday's incident will be the second in recent years, that youths in parts of Borno state torched police stations. On 23rd December, 2007, some youths numbering about 250 set two police outposts ablaze in Gwoza local government area over the alleged killing of two colleagues of theirs by a business man.

The youths, who burnt down the businessman's house along with those of his relations before clamping down on the police, alleged that the police failed to

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arrest the man who killed their friend. The incident resulted into a clash between the irate youths and the police which resulted in the deaths of two people with three houses torched.

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