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Kogi cult clashes jolt Igalaland

By Itodo Daniel Sule, Lokoja | Publish Date: Jun 9 2018 5:35AM

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■ Achema, from Ajastone, killed during one of the clashes



■ Musa, also killed in a clash



■ Haliru Hassan, also killed

The growing spate of violent cult clashes across some communities in Igalaland, particularly Anyigba, Idah and Ankpa axis of Kogi State is giving residents and stakeholders serious concern.

The activities of rival cult groups in these communities have led to loss of many lives and affected socio-economic life of the people.

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Observers say the presence of higher institutions of learning in the aforementioned areas could be one of the factors breeding cult activities.

The higher institutions include the Kogi State University Anyigba, Federal Polytechnic Idah and College of Education Ankpa.

The latest rival cult clashes were recorded last week at Anyigba in Dekina Local Government Area of the state.

In the various clashes which took place in the area between Wednesday and Thursday last week, seven persons were reported killed.

A source knowledgeable about the activities of the groups said the clashes were between two rival groups namely; the Eiye confraternity and Aro Bagger Confraternity.

He said the groups had been in existence for over seven years and had series of clashes which led to death of no fewer than 17 persons from both sides.

According to him, the genesis of the clashes between the two groups dated back to about seven years ago when a member of the Eiye confraternity was allegedly killed at the Muslim High School, Anyigba by the Aro Bagger group over a girl. He said since then, the two groups had continued to engage each other.

According to him, the recent clashes were triggered by the Aro Bagger group after killing a member of the Eiye confraternity.

The Eiye confraternity was said to have gone on a revenge mission resulting in the deaths of six more persons. It was gathered that the victims were gunned down at various places in the community.

According to the source, one person was killed at Ofejikpi, one at Kaduna Efekpe, two at Anguwa Muslumi, one at Ijebu-Ode, one at Ajastone and one at Ofeko Anyigba.

He said following the incident, fully armed military men were deployed to Anyigba to maintain peace.

According to the source, the activities of the rival cult groups continued to assume dangerous dimension in recent times as they



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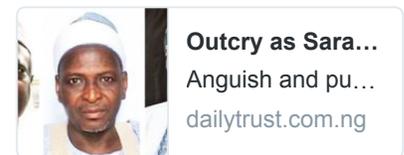


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are now more daring and could operate in broad daylight, shooting sporadically.

He said the activities of the groups are impacting negatively on both economic activities and social life in the area as people could hardly stay outdoors beyond 8pm.

According to him, people from neighbouring villages are afraid of coming to transact business at the Anyigba market as the groups sometimes operate at daytime.

A resident of Anyigba, Unekwu Joseph who expressed, said people now live in fear.

He said apart from the clashes that usually occur between members of the rival groups from time to time, some of them do engage in other criminalities.

Another resident, Ameh John, said more teenagers and youths were being initiated into the groups and urged the government to find way of addressing the issue.

He stressed the need to organize sensitisation programmes for youths and students in higher institutions in the area on the dangers of cultism and the need for those who are already involved to renounce membership.

The Kogi State chairman of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Comrade Oladele Nihi, condemned the trend as he charged those involved in cult activities to renounce it in the interest of their future.

He said the youth council on its part would intensify sensitisation campaigns among the student community against taking to cultism and other social vices.

Nihi called on security agencies to apprehend those involved in such clashes to serve as deterrent.

Meanwhile, the Kogi State Police Command said it had arrested some of the suspects involved in the cult clashes at Anyigba.

The spokesman of the command, William Aya, who confirmed this to our correspondent, added that some arms were also recovered



from the suspects. He warned those engaging in cultism and other criminalities to repent or face the full wrath of the law.

According to the spokesman of the Kogi State Police Command, William Aya, a joint operation by the Army and police carried out in Anyigba led to the arrest of six suspected cult members.

He said exhibits recovered from the suspects include one English Pistol, one locally made pistol, one short gun, 10 cartridges, one axe and charms.

Aya said that all the suspects arrested were students of the Kogi State University (KSU) Anyigba.

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