

3 killed in Benue communal clash over power supply

From Hope Abah Emmanuel,
Makurdi

At least three people were reportedly killed on Monday after a disagreement between youths of Obi and Otukpo local government areas of Benue State over a disconnected electricity supply.

Trouble was said to have started when the youths from the Ijegwu community of Obi LGA allegedly accused their counterparts of Ojantele in Otukpo of tampering with the high tension electricity supply linking both local government areas after noticing a four-day blackout in their vicinity.

It was alleged that the Ijegwu youths further climbed the pole bearing the electric switch to authenticate their suspicion when those from the Ojantele community angrily confronted them.

The confrontation, it was learnt, degenerated into a fight and before long, the youths engaged each other with weapons including guns which led to the initial death of one person while a few others sustained gunshot injuries.

However, the parties to the

disagreement were said to have afterwards mobilised against each other, resulting in the death of two more people and bringing the number of casualties to three with several others injured.

Residents also told our correspondent at the time of filing this report that many houses in both communities had been razed by the fighting youths.

Contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, SP Catherine Anene, confirmed that an incident occurred in the area over electricity supply.

Anene however added that she had yet to know whether any death was recorded because the details about the entire incident had not been made available to her.

Meanwhile, the Jos Electricity Distribution Company (JED) Regional Manager in Otukpo, Olaniyi Ogunmakinya, told journalists in Makurdi that the challenge in the area was because they were repairing faulty lines.

"What actually happened is that there are what we call isolators which we use to segment our network. If

there are problems in some areas, we use them to isolate those areas and allow others to have electricity supply while we work on the areas that have problems.

"I have that isolated towards the end of Otukpo LGA linking Obi. And when it rained a few days ago and we heard that our lines were destroyed, we had to isolate the affected areas to enable us to work on the lines. But whenever we do this to repair the lines, the people on the Obi LGA side will not be happy that we are isolating them to repair the line; they would prefer that everyone is denied power supply instead of isolating them alone before the repairs.

"So from what I heard, two days ago they allegedly marched to that isolation point to sabotage it. But the youth of the community that would be affected by their action resisted them which led to the conflict. That is the most I know. I cannot tell whether they killed each other or not. From the report I got, they did not destroy our facilities. It was the attempt to sabotage our isolators that was resisted by the youth of Otukpo," he said.