

5 beheaded as Tivs, Cross River community clash

**From Eyo Charles,
Calabar**

At least five persons of Tivs extraction from Benue State residing in Ijiegu-Yache community in Yala LGA of Cross River State have been beheaded.

A Tiv leader in the community, Chief Jacob Uswa, confirmed this Wednesday, saying many others had been maimed.

He said the Yache boys attacked the victims when they went to their farms to harvest cassava.

"Despite the presence of the soldiers sent to keep the peace between us, the Yache boys have continued to spring attacks on our people from the bushes and farms where the soldiers are not present.

"On Sunday, 8th October 2023, they attacked and beheaded three of our boys

on their farms where they had gone to harvest cassava.

"Two others were also killed on another farm. They even took away the heads to display before their people. The Yache boys are all over the bushes to attack us," Uswa stated.

Reacting, a youth leader in Ijiegu-Yache community, Augustine Adula, in a telephone interview with our correspondent, confirmed the killing, saying it was a reprisal.

He said, "We have suffered incessant attacks from those Tiv settlers. They invade our community wearing military camouflages and sometimes they would take us by surprise through the bushes to attack us.

"They go to our farms to harvest our farm yields and attack our women. As a result, our boys have stopped their businesses and schools

and have taken positions in the bushes to defend our land and people, so that they can block the Tivs when they come surreptitiously."

Adula said the situation had made life very difficult for them, adding that markets and schools had not opened due to deep-seated fear for their lives.

He said that food was not available anymore since they could not go to their farms to harvest or to buy foods from the markets.

The resurgence of killings and setting ablaze of houses on both sides has been as a result of alleged refusal by the Tiv settlers to pay royalties.

But the Tivs have claimed that having settled in the community for over 100 years, they are more of Cross River than Benue State indigenes.

Both community leaders

have expressed unhappiness that the number of security men, including soldiers sent to keep the peace between them is very few and that the operatives were mostly in the town, leaving the hinterlands very porous for the killings to persist.

Before Governor Bassey Otu asked the soldiers to move in to keep the peace, 15 persons had been killed on both sides and over 30 houses burnt.

The deputy governors of both states, Peter Odey (Cross River) and Sam Ode (Benue) visited the community and appealed for cessation of hostilities while they worked towards peace.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Irene Ugbo, said the police had yet to receive a formal report about the latest killings.