

One Killed, Settlement Burnt As Residents, Farmers Clash In Bayelsa



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One person has been reportedly killed and a farm settlement burnt as the people of Akaibiri and Bumoundi communities in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State clashed with Anam farmers doing commercial farming in the area.

The Anam people from Anambra State have been operating farm settlements in most places in Bayelsa State to cultivate crops for commercial purposes.

Daily Trust gathered that the problem started on October 6, when one Mr Apah Abel, from Bumoundi community was allegedly murdered on allegation of stealing at the farm settlement.

The indigenes of Akaibiri and Bumoundi were said to have launched a reprisal, setting the farm settlement on fire.

The Bayelsa State Police Command said that two persons were already in custody over Abel's killing and warned the people of Akaibiri and Bumoundi communities, as well as Anam farmers against taking the law into their own hands.

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The Bayelsa State Commissioner of Police, Alonyenu Idu, represented by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, in charge of State Criminal Investigation Department, Gabriel Elaigwu, while speaking during a meeting with the state deputy governor and the stakeholders from the two communities and farmers on Tuesday, confirmed that the two suspects allegedly involved in the murder of Apah were already in police custody and promised that a thorough investigation would be conducted.

Meanwhile, the state government has called on non-indigenes to respect constituted authority wherever they reside in order to maintain the prevailing peace, law and order in the state.

The state Deputy Governor, Senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, who stated this during a meeting with the people of Akaibiri and Bumoundi communities as well as Anam farmers, urged the farmers to exercise restraint.

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Ewhrudjakpo, in a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media, Mr Doubara Atasi, underscored the need for non-indigenes to take into cognisance the laws and traditional practices of host communities to foster peaceful co-existence.

He noted that henceforth visitors must be properly introduced to community leadership by their landlords as part of efforts to enhance the identification and arrest of criminals who perpetrate crime in the state.

He also cautioned community leaders to reside in their various domains and be alive to their responsibilities to consolidate on the peace and stability in the state.

He said: “I want to appeal that all our communities in Ekpetiama should maintain the peace. CP should also liaise with other security agencies and maintain some security presence in the area until this matter is properly laid to rest.

“We encourage all our communities to have vigilantes so that this idea of self-help will be minimised. Because if the vigilantes were doing their job, this would not happen. And to the Anam people, you don’t have the right to kill a thief. You only have the right to catch a thief and hand the person over to law enforcement agents.

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“If they are stealing your property, don’t resort to self help, report to the police and your host communities. You need to communicate this to all your people wherever they are in Ijawland.”

The Ibenanaowei of Ekpetiama Clan, HRM King Bubaraye Dakolo (Agada IV), thanked the state government for quickly intervening in the matter to forestall a breakdown of law and order.

King Dakolo, while urging the police to ensure that those behind the killing of the deceased and burning of the Anam farm settlements face the full weight of the law, called on the Anam farmers to respect the existing culture and traditions, as well as recognise the hierarchy of leadership in their host communities.

Speaking on behalf of the Anam farmers, Chief Bernard Ozoekwe, expressed gratitude to the state government for its prompt intervention, saying they were peace-loving people who have been farming in the state for over 20 years. He promised the farmers would be law-abiding in their respective host communities.