

3 Die In Ogoni Cults Clash

FROM
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THREE persons are feared dead and scores of others injured in a fresh outbreak of hostilities between two rival gangs in the Gokana Local Government Council of Rivers State.

The Guardian gathered that the groups — *Deebam* and *Deewell* — in Bodo area of the council, which were reportedly armed with sophisticated weapons and allegedly funded by two top politicians from the area; resumed their battle for supremacy in the early hours of yesterday.

A source alleged that members of the *Deebam* had, for inexplicable reason, stormed the home of a youth that they accused of fraternising with the *Deewell* group and apprehended him.

And when the news made the rounds, members of the rival *Deebam*, who "perceived the arrest of the youth as an act of provocation," hurriedly mobilised for counter action.

Determined to rescue the youth, the *Deebam* youths reportedly went after the

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Deewell boys.

The two groups eventually met close to the Bodo Post Office, "where they engaged themselves in a gun duel that lasted several hours," the source said.

It was gathered last night that three members of the gangs had been killed; and due to the fierce fighting, residents of the community had remained indoors causing all economic and social activities to be grounded.

The battle for supremacy by the two groups has

claimed over 15 lives in the past three months. The politicians funding them are said to target controlling Bodo, and indeed, Ogoni politics.

Two of the accused politicians, who were recently arrested and later released by security agents, have repeatedly denied links with the groups.

Contacted yesterday, the Rivers State Police Command spokesperson, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, told *The Guardian* that she had not been formally briefed on the fresh fighting at Bodo.