

Ogoni Clash Claims 10 Lives, Over 200 Houses

FROM KELVIN EBIRI,
PORT HARCOURT

THE renewed bloodletting in Ogoniland in Rivers State continued at the weekend with 10 persons feared dead and 200 houses razed by armed rampaging

youths in Mogho.

Also, yesterday, Mr. Gabriel Pidonsom, a lawmaker representing Gokana Constituency, incurred the wrath of Bodo armed gangs for failing to support the invasion in Mogho.

The gang subsequently torched his father's

houses and reportedly killed two of his relations.

The communal clash between two Ogoni communities of Bodo and Mogho in Gokana Local Government Area of the state, started on Tuesday.

Indigenes of Mogho

had discovered the decapitated and mutilated corpse of a 63-year-old woman in her farm. Accusing fingers were quickly pointed at neighbouring Bodo.

Infuriated by the murder of the old woman, irate Mogho youths went on rampage. They

blocked the road leading to Bodo and brutalised anyone identified to be from there.

But the crisis turned into a full-scale war on Thursday when Mogho youths alleged killed a commercial bus driver at Kpor, the council's headquarters.

However, the Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Felix Ogbaudu, told *The Guardian* that scores of anti-riot policemen had been deployed to the area to forestall further escalation of the crisis, which has rendered hundreds

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

10 More Die In Ogoni Clash

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of people homeless and turned them into refugees in neighbouring Ogoni communities.

Baridom Mene, a native of Mogho, whose house was razed down yesterday, confirmed that over 10 persons, including women and children, were abducted and taken to Bodo where they were killed.

He explained that policemen deployed to Mogho to keep the peace watched haplessly while the rampaging invaders wreak havoc in the community.

The invaders were alleged to have worn military uniforms, which made the people to suspect they were men of the Joint Task Force.

"After Friday's killings and destruction, Bodo youths returned yesterday (Saturday) and burnt down over 700 houses, including that of the paramount chief, Dandison Opbe Kpea and the property of the councilor representing the Mogho ward 10," he said. "No part of the village was spared."

Mene said suspicion that Bodo people were responsible for the murder of the woman was fuelled by rumours that some cultists from Bodo had been seen earlier in the week jubilating and displaying a severed human skull, which was presumed to be the head of the dead woman.

Narrating his ordeal, lawmaker Pidomson, who hails from Bodo, said his relations were

killed and his father and uncle's houses razed because he refused to support the attack on the neighbouring community.

"Bodo is about five times the size of Mogho and I told my paramount ruler that I could not join in the invasion of Mogho because I am a representative of the people," he said yesterday in Port Harcourt.

"Bodo people went to Mogho, invaded the whole place and, after burning the houses, they went straight to my father's houses to burn down the houses and killed two persons."

Rivers State Commissioner for Finance, Kenneth Kobani, who is hails from Bodo, has also condemned the attack on Mogho. He

said he was terribly appalled and terrified at the scale of destruction and violence that had taken place in the two Ogoni communities.

"It is shameful," he said. "Evil has permeated our society. The security agencies should intervene. Whoever is responsible for this mindless destruction must be found and dealt with."

"We have spoken to youth leaders. This is madness. Nobody in his right mind will condone these mindless killings. Those who are involved in this callous outrage should be brought to book."

Ogbaudu confirmed the destruction of houses and killings, but could not ascertain the number of those killed.