

One dies in Borno communal clash over farmlands, grazing plots

ONE person was feared killed and two others shot yesterday at Koshebe village in Mafa Local Council of Borno State in a clash between two communities over the ownership and use of farmlands and grazing reserve.

Bows and arrows, cutlasses and dane guns were reportedly used freely in the latest clash in the long-standing feud over the lands.

The two injured persons were admitted at the University Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH), but several others who sustained machete cuts have fled the communities for fear of being arrested by policemen who had been drafted to the scene of the communal clash.

Chairman, Mafa Local Council, Mahmud Maina, confirmed the clash, saying property worth million of naira were destroyed in it.

He, however, denied that people had fled the village or were displaced because of the feud, which erupted between the two groups of farmers and pastoralists.

Maina said normalcy had since returned to the area as the police were in control of the situation, while the Criminal Investigation Department of the state's police command was handling the matter.

Villagers in one of the warring groups told *The Guardian* that the fight broke out after they were barred from the disputed grazing reserve where they hunt, gather firewood and graze their livestock.

An anonymous villager said: "Most of us were going

*From Njadvara Musa,
Maiduguri*

into the grazing reserve for various reasons but the forest guards stopped us from entering the grazing reserves.

"Along the line, the current chairman of Mafa, Mahmud Lawan, told people during his campaign in 2007 that he would allow the people to access the land if he was elected chairman and people voted for him.

"When he was elected, people began to trespass into the land. Then, forest officials came and insisted that no one should go into the place. Some days back, a former councillor came and ordered some people to go into the reserve and they did.

"On Saturday, some security men came and asked a Bulama to identify those people that trespassed into the reserve which he did and the people were arrested one after the other.

"Lawan went and bailed them after a few hours and when they returned, they accused our group of revealing their identity to security men and we began to argue, almost about fighting. The argument subsided and every one left.

"But unknown to us, they were planning to ambush us in the early hours of yesterday which they did at about 12: 30 a.m. We defended ourselves, everyone had different weapons, some of us had dane guns since many of us are hunters and we engaged ourselves as a result of which some people were shot and one person died."