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Four die in Taraba communal clashes

THURSDAY, 29 DECEMBER 2011 00:00 FROM CHARLES AKPEJI, JALINGO NEWS - NATIONAL

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NO FEWER than four people have been killed and property worth millions of naira razed in an on-going communal clash between the Tiv community and the Fulani in Chanchangi Ward of Takum Local Council of Taraba State.

Demavea Village, which is one of the settlements of the Tiv people in the community, has become a ghost town as all houses in it have been burnt down.

The crisis, which broke out in the early hours of Boxing Day, was allegedly caused by members of one of the communities who raised a false alarm on the sudden disappearance of one of their kinsmen and pointed accusing fingers at a neighbouring community for the disappearance.

He was said to have won the sympathy of his kinsmen, who, according to eyewitnesses, immediately went berserk.

The upheaval, according to an eyewitness, spread "because both the Tiv and the Fulani in spite of their close ties, have been having grudges against each other. So the false alarm raised by one of them gave them the opportunity to vent their anger.

The source added: "To be frank with you, this crisis has been there for a long time. There had been discreet killings between both communities. Only that they both decided to slug it out physically this time following the disappearance of one of the members of one of the communities".

But another eyewitness, who claimed to have escaped from the crisis area through a footpath leading to a nearby local council area, claimed that the "people fighting themselves are not actually from the communities. They are all mercenaries from other states.

"If they are from the communities, we would have known them. But the faces we saw were all unknown. The types of weapons they were using also showed that the attackers were strangers because no villager can handle them".

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Ibiang Mbesakei, confirmed that the command was "already aware of the clashes" and that "we have already drafted our men to the scene".

Neighbouring communities like Katsina-Ala in Benue State, Wukari, Donga and Takum local councils are now playing host to hundreds of refugees who fled the burning communities.

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