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## Tension as soldiers kill Ombatse cult leader in Adamawa

TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2013 00:00 FROM SAXONE AKHAINE (KADUNA)  
AND MSUGH ITYOKURA (LAFIA) [NEWS - NATIONAL](#)



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LEADER of the Ombatse cult group, who led his members on a mission to Obi Local Council of Nasarawa State where scores were killed and property destroyed, has been killed by the army.

His name could not be given as at press time but his body was said to have been taken to a hospital in Lafia, the state capital. Three of his fellow members who went on the same mission with him have also been arrested by the police and brought to the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Lafia.

The Guardian gathered that the tension heightened when a Fulani mercenary allegedly killed an Eggon youth in broad day light after a heated argument at a drinking joint.

The Ombatse militia is said to be waxing stronger as manifested in the kind of sophisticated weapons being used by the group.

It was gathered that the continued upheavals in the state were orchestrated by the Eggon to affirm their control of the state come 2015, having not been opportuned to govern the state since it's creation about 17 years ago.

The tension in Lafia has also been escalated by threats by Eggon youths to burn down a police station and release some members of the Ombatse who were said to be in detention. The developments have compelled the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to withdraw corps members serving in Obi Local Council for fear of a reprisal attack from Ombatse militia.

Irked by the violence and community clashes in Nasarawa State, Arewa elders have urged the Federal Government to investigate the upheavals and bring those behind them to book.

Meanwhile, the Borno State Police Command has said peace has returned to Maiduguri, the state capital, claiming that the five indicators of peaceful atmosphere among the various communities and other ethnic and religious groups in the metropolis have become positive, without loss of lives and property in the last three months.

The Adamawa Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) Cornelius Ocholi said three members of the warring Alago tribe have also been arrested and brought to the headquarters while four are receiving treatment at the Lafia Specialist Hospital.

The premises of the police headquarters wore a pathetic look yesterday morning as officers mobilised for deployment to the crises areas were sober, some were sighted sleeping in a truck as arrangements were being made for take off.

It was gathered that the action of the soldiers was to prevent Ombatse from remobilising to launch an attack on the police station in Obi where their deceased leader went and allegedly forced the

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Divisional Police Officer (DPO) to release his members in detention.

The DPO was said to have conducted the Ombatse leader round the station to assure him that his members were not in their custody.

But the action of the army who have taken over the streets of Lafia and other parts of the state has ignited speculations of a possible reprisal from the Ombatse, hence residents deserted the area.

Troops were confronted by the Ombatse militia with their late leader leading the offensive, but they could not stand the superior fire of the army, according to an officer who spoke to The Guardian in confidence.

"We shelled the place and got him. We killed them like rabbits since they could not overpower our superior power," the soldier said, adding that the military is also a cult and is ready to overcome any supernatural force in Nasarawa, hence their heavy presence to curb the Ombatse menace.

Trouble was said to have started on Sunday evening when Eggon youths, in their hundreds, allegedly threatened to forcefully release members of Ombatse militia who were said to have been detained at the B Police Division. They were arrested in a cattle market in Lafia with AK 47 rifles and ammunition while attempting to buy machetes to carry out attacks.

The youths were said to have marched to the B Police Division headquarters located at Millionaire Quarters, demanding unconditional release of their members who were brought to the police station by one of the leaders of the market who was said to have rescued them to prevent the angry mob from killing the youths.

Efforts to pacify the youths to leave the station by their elders failed as more arrived on motorcycles from different directions to wreak havoc on the police station. The youths were said to have hung around till late evening when an Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) was drafted by the police to contain any eventuality.

Some of the youths who spoke in anger threatened that it would take them no time to set the whole of Lafia ablaze if their people were not be released.

The youths later left the station after they were told that the arrested boys had escaped from the station following a meeting between some Eggon elders and some government officials at the police station.

The Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Adamu Muazu Adogi, and other government officials were sighted at the police station attending the meeting.

Efforts to reach the Commissioner of Police, Umar Shehu, failed.

Meanwhile, no corps member was killed during the ethnic clash between the Eggon and Alago at the weekend where over 50 people reportedly lost their lives and property worth millions of naira destroyed.

The State Coordinator of NYSC, Mrs. Olabanji Bolanle, told newsmen that the corps members evacuated are now taking refuge at the various NYSC family houses in Lafia where they will stay temporary pending when the tensed situation in Obi calms down.

There is however no palliative measure in place for them to cushion the hardship associated with living outside their place of abode without anything on them.

"I could not even carry my wallet because we were hurrying to live our place of primary assignment to save our lives," said a corps member who identified himself as Ola.

The NYSC director ruled out the possibility of redeploying the corps members to other areas, assuring them of their safety in Lafia.

According to the Northern elders, the refusal to punish those behind the past crises has continued to fuel further violence by some communities in Nasarawa.

In a statement by the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) yesterday, the elders stated that the Forum "has noted with shock and great concern the intermittent and mindless communal crises in Nasarawa State between communities who hitherto lived peacefully among themselves, but have now decided to take it out on each other in order to address their concerns.

"As a result, lives and properties are being lost unduly. Arewa Consultative Forum condemns such heartless and mindless destruction of properties and lives with the strongest of terms, precisely because resort to violence has never resolved perceived grievances anywhere across the globe".

The statement signed by the National Publicity Secretary of ACF, Mr. Anthony Sani appealed to the feuding factions "to lay down their arms and embrace civilized way of addressing perceived grievances in the interest of peaceful coexistence needed for socioeconomic development", saying "as they do so,



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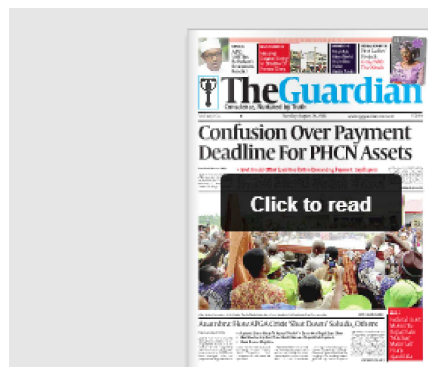
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the feuding communities must note that all communities are settlers."

Stressing on the settler status of all the inhabitants of Nasarawa State communities, Sani argued that, "the only difference lies in the fact that some people settle in the morning, some others in the afternoon while some settle in the evening.

"So, all that is required is for us to make the most of our diversity by working hard to overcome what divide the people, and in favour of core values of humanity that unite us".

Governor Tanko Al-Makura is yet to return to the state despite the heightening tension in the land. He has been away for about two weeks following the advice of his doctors to have a rest from office for medical reasons.

Speaking yesterday on the state of security under emergency rule in Borno State, the Police Commissioner, Lawal Tanko, at an interactive session with newsmen at the Police Headquarters, Maiduguri said that the level of traffic flow in the metropolis has been increasing remarkably with roads and streets filled with vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

According to Tanko, an increase in the flow of traffic on a daily basis in the metropolis is a clear "indication and assurance" of peace returning to the metropolis without fear of attacks that had been recorded in Maiduguri for over three years.

His words: "Besides remarkable increase in traffic flow, there are four other indicators here in Maiduguri that assured the citizenry and other members of the society that peace has returned. The indicators include the opening of shops of non-indigenes, increased economic activities at the closed markets in Budum, Abganaram and Lawan Bukar wards, performance of late night prayers at places of worship, and the total absence of bomb blasts in the last four months."

He said when the indicators of peace are also observed in other towns and villages outside the state capital, where there were recent attacks and killings at Benishiekh, Dumba, Mainok, Konduga, Damboa and Damasak, a border town with Niger Republic, peace can then be said to have been fully restored in the state.

He, however, noted that the police and other security agencies cannot successfully operate without the cooperation of newsmen to protect life and property.

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Author of this article: **From Saxone Akhaine (Kaduna) and Msugh Ityokura (Lafia)**

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