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Two killed in communal clash in Gombe

By Auwal Ahmed, Gombe on June 15, 2015

TWO people were yesterday killed and one other seriously wounded during a clash between Kufai in Billiri and Kulishi in Kaltungo Local Councils of Gombe State over a farmland dispute.

The Guardian investigation revealed that the crisis had been recurring every rainy season for more than 30 years, over the disputed piece of farmland, with a lingering legal battle of ownership between the Kufai people of Billiri Local Council and Kulishi people in Shomgom Local Council.

Confirming the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer of the State Police Command, DSP Fwaji Atajiri, stated that the Command had not received reports that anybody died in the clash and the Police had not made any arrests, so as not to escalate the situation, but the Command had take the control of the area by deploying mobile policemen there to deal with the situation.

Meanwhile, the state's Deputy Governor, Mr Charles Iliya, who hails from Billiri Local Council, has expressed disappointment over the behaviour of the people, describing it as barbaric and warning residents of the areas that government would no longer condone their destructive clashes.

Also speaking to newsmen in Kufai village of Billiri Local Council, the village head of Poshiya, Mr Dedan Kamasko, said the incident was a usual occurrence yearly, during the rainy season.

"We normally have misunderstanding between Shangom and Kaltungo local councils, though they are two councils but under the same chieftdom. Two people died and one person sustained injuries in communal clash."

"There has been an argument concerning a piece of land over the years but the matter was taken to court and we, the people of Billiri won the case, the court handed over the land to us and we have proof that the piece of land belongs to us."

"Last year, by this time, they encroached on the land, cultivated it and yesterday, they shifted a little bit further, cultivating another side."

"When our people saw them, they raised an alarm, went and met them, and talked to them. They came near us and wanted to attack us.

Unfortunately for them, we mobilised some group of men who stood and protected our territory."

"They saw two people in the farm when they crossed the valley to the other side of our territory. They shot one and the other one they cut his neck with a weapon and the other person who was injured was coming back to Billiri from Kaltungo. They attacked him and he sustained injuries," Kamasko explained.

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