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10 feared killed in Kogi tribal crisis

By John Akubo, Lokoja
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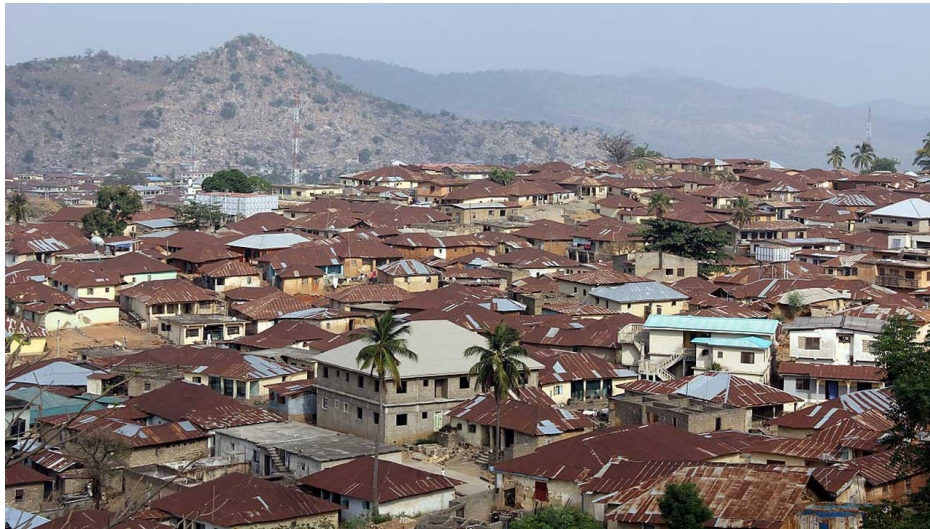


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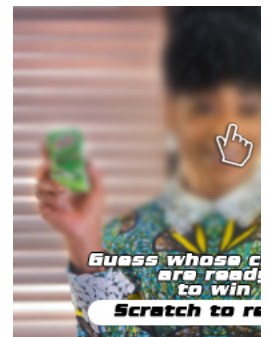
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The hostility between Ebirra and Bassa-Komu ethnic tribes in Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State came to a head yesterday as 10 people were feared killed in a crisis that erupted between them.

Many people were also injured in the crisis that followed the return of the Ebirra people who were displaced from their various communities earlier due to the quarrel that started last year April.

The police command Public Relations Officer, William Aya, who confirmed the incident yesterday in Lokoja, said there was no cause for alarm as the situation had been brought under control.



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He said that two people lost their lives in the renewed crisis between the two ethnic groups who have been at dagger drawn in the eastern part of the state for months.

Aya said the police command had drafted a team of mobile policemen, conventional policemen and other security agents led by the assistant commissioner of police in charge of operations to the affected areas to restore normalcy as quickly as possible.

“Two people were killed. One killed yesterday, and the second one today. Calm has returned to the affected areas.

The CP in charge of operations, mobile police, conventional police, area commanders and soldiers are already there to restore law and order,” he said.

It was gathered that following the intervention of elders from the area, the Ebirra speaking people, who fled their homes in many communities as a result of the crisis, were asked to go back to their villages by the state government in order to pave way for a lasting peace among the two ethnic groups.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the displaced Ebirra, who were accompanied by security operatives and political appointees, including the Bassa Local Government administrator, Sam Alumka, returned to Oguma, the headquarters of the local government on Wednesday, from where they were expected to go to their various villages.

It was alleged that uncomplimentary remarks by the paramount ruler of Bassa-Komu ethnic group, the Aguma of Bassa, William Keke, sparked off the latest crisis. He allegedly said the returning Ebirra people should go back to Lokoja or where they had been staying when they were away.

A source also alleged that the Ohiogba of Mozum, Alhaji Halidu Bukar Ali and other Ebira leaders who were at Aguma of Bassa's palace to receive their people back home were nearly ambushed by hoodlums, but for the intervention of the security operatives.

The Guardian gathered that the escape of the Ohiogba of Mozum and other Ebira leaders from attack and the alleged ungarded statement of Keke led to the crisis in which more than 10 persons were said to have been killed.

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