

# Seven die, scores injured in Cross River/Benue dispute

From Tina Agosi Todo, Calabar

**S**EVEN persons were reportedly killed and scores injured following boundary and farmland dispute between Yache community in Yala Local Council of Cross River and Tiv in Benue State.

Sources said about 10 persons; including women, were dealt with deep machete cuts, while 15 houses were set ablaze on both sides.

The Guardian gathered that trouble started on Sunday morning when some youths from Yache allegedly went to Tiv settlers in the community, while most people were still in church, to request for royalties for staying on their land, but the Tiv people resisted, and a fight broke out between the two tribes. Speaking in a telephone conversation, a community leader in Yache, Augustine Odey Adula, said: "A few of our youths went to inquire from the Tiv settlers why they have refused to pay royalties as usual for settling on our lands. But the Tiv people allegedly detained one of our youths, beat him to stupor and he died on the spot.



Some burnt buildings

"Of course, that triggered a reprisal. But they were prepared. They attacked and killed seven of our people and burnt 15 houses. Before now, the Tiv people have been paying royalties to their host community, but I don't know what went wrong that they have to resort to killing someone."

Confirming the incident, a renowned lawyer, who happens to be the Secretary of Yala, Cross River North Elders Forum, Sir Leonard Anyogo,

described the development as unfortunate.

He said deputy governors of both states had earlier met the people and appealed for peace, while they handled the issue.

Anyogo said there has not been a clear-cut boundary demarcation, adding that Tiv people have settled on the land.

He further hinted that the said land was where the boundary of the then Southern and Northern Protec-

torates was and it actually belonged to the Yache community.

He also confirmed that the state government and security agencies have stepped into the matter.

When contacted, spokesperson for Cross River State Police Command, Irene Ugbo, said they are yet to receive an official report about the incident from the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), but promised to get back before press time.

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