

Metro

Three dead, several injured in Cross River communal clash

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Cross River State Police Commissioner, Gyogon Augustine Grimah

Three people have been killed and several others injured in a violent clash between rival factions in Iko Esai Community, Akamkpa Local Council of Cross River State.

The renewed conflict, which erupted on Sunday evening, followed a long-standing dispute within the community.

The immediate trigger for the violence was the celebration of a newly selected youth president by a faction loyal to the former Village Head, Chief Obio Arong Owai.

A community source, who wished to remain anonymous, told The Guardian that the deceased, identified as Christian Esiri, was shot by a relative of Chief Owai during an altercation at the village square. The two other fatalities were reportedly members of Chief Owai's family.

According to the source, the conflict began when the newly formed youth executive, loyal to Chief Owai, effectively blocked passage through the village square. When the incumbent youth president attempted to pass through the gathering, a heated argument ensued, culminating in the fatal shooting of Esiri. The same individual accused of killing Esiri is alleged to have also shot and wounded the town crier last year, an incident that was reported to the police and local council chairman, though the accused evaded arrest at the time.

The killing of Esiri ignited a violent reprisal, with members of the incumbent youth president's faction retaliating against Chief Owai's supporters.

The source reported that approximately five houses, including Chief Owai's compound, were destroyed by fire. The death toll is feared to rise due to numerous injuries inflicted with machetes. Chief Owai's loyalists are reported to have fled the community, while the incumbent youth group remains in the village square.

A resident, Savior Arong, who fled the village with his family, described a scene of chaos and terror. He explained that the two youth factions have been embroiled in conflict for years, marked by repeated police interventions and court cases.

He confirmed that the latest outbreak of violence was triggered by the fatal shooting at the village square. Arong added that many residents sought refuge in neighbouring communities like Agoi Ibami and Iko Ikperem.

As of late Sunday night, the DPO of Uyanga, along with army personnel and police officers, were on the ground assessing the damage and casualties.

When contacted by The Guardian, the Cross River State Security Adviser, Maj. Gen. Okoi Obono declined to comment on the situation. Efforts to reach the Cross River State Police Command Public Relations Officer, SP Irene Ugbo, were unsuccessful at the time of this report.

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