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Fri

25

Aug 2007

8 9 10 11

22 23 24

21

28 29 30 31

Wed Thu

Home Page > Niger Delta

Biakpan Community Warns Etono Over Attacks

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By Bassey Inyang, Correspondent, Calabar

Biakpan indigenes in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State have threatened to defend themselves if attacked further by the Etono people.

The warning came as a result of an alleged attack on Biakpan indigenes by their Etono neigbours on July 23, 2007.

During the attack, a hamlet locally called New Jerusalem, where members of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star (BCS) converge for their annual pilgrimage, was burnt down.

community by BCS was also burnt down during the A PRINTIT attack, while a commercial motorcyclist, Mr. Paul Etim Umoh, who resides in Biakpan, was kidnapped at about 1 pm and released the following day at about 5 pm, but without his motorcycle."



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The spokesman of Biakpan community, Chief Kanu Ogo, who addressed to journalists, said the July 23, 2007 attack on the community by their Etono neigbours was just one in the series of attacks launched against it recently.

Ogo alleged that on March 7, this year, the people of Etono killed Chief Kanu Etekpi, an 80-year old man, who was going to his farm, adding that "on March 29, the Etono people invaded Biakpan, when the people had gone to the farm and burnt houses and killed one person in the process."

He said despite all the provocative violent attacks against Biakpan. "the community has refused to retaliate because it sees itself as part of Etono people that constitute one of the villages that make up Biakpan clan."

Ogo pointed out that "the dispute over the status of Etono as it relates to Biakpan has long been decided by various courts in Nigeria, and in all the judgments delivered, from the High Court in Calabar, the Appeal Court in Enugu and the Supreme Court, it has been declared variously that Etono is part of Biakpan and has no separate land and identity from the people of Biakpan Clan."

Ogo explained that on February 2, 2007 the Cross River State government issued a White Paper to affirm the judgment of the Supreme Court to the effect that Etono remains part of Biakpan, adding that despite the position of the government on the issue, "the Etono people have continued to attack Biakpan violently."

Besides, he advised the state government to ensure that the people of Etono respect the decisions of the court and the position of government on the issue to prevent the outbreak of violence of greater proportion in future.

Ogo said, "the people of Biakpan have been reluctant to hit back at Etono because they (Etono) are our children, sisters and brothers.

"Any Biakpan man who says he has no relation in Etono is not a true Biakpan man.

"By the time you kill one Etono man you are killing a Biakpan man."

He revealed that "the constant attacks launched by the Etono people stem from their desire to cede from Biakpan despite the fact they have no genuine case or reason other that very selfish interest, fanned by some elites from Etono, whose parents never complained of their being Biakpan people."

According to him, before the Nigerian civil war, no Etono person tried to carve a separate identity of the area from Biakpan, alleging that "the elites from Etono, who are sponsoring the crisis got their higher education through scholarship granted to them as Biakpan citizens."

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