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Proper Boundary Demarcation 'Il Solve Agila, Ngbo Crisis – Ede

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Chairman of Ado Local Government Council in Benue State, James Ede, has spent less than a month in office. But the realities of a protracted boundary dispute between his Agila people and their Ngbo neighbours in Ebonyi State is causing him sleepless nights. In this interview with Correspondent, Terna Doki, in Makurdi, Ede recounts the plight of his people and says apart from demarcating the boundary, a major road and a police post at the buffer zone appear to be the only workable solution to the clashes. Excerpts:

We hear that there is renewed violence between the people of Agila in Benue and their Ngbo neighbours in Ebonyi State. What is really the problem?

The problem, like people normally say, is a boundary problem. But the dimension it has taken now has really shown that it has gone beyond the boundary problem, because when we were at Agila, we were told that the boundary between Agila and Ngbo is several kilometers from Agila town. But the attackers have extended the attack to Agila town. If it were really a boundary problem, they would have stopped at the boundary area.

So, what is the nature of the latest attacks on your people?

Sometimes they come in the night and lay ambush and when they meet people going to the farm early in the morning, they grip them, attacked them with guns and cutlasses and sometimes, even butchered them. There have been cases of killings, almost within the interval of three days apart in this area.

How many people can you say have been killed in the latest attacks?

Over five people were killed recently. They have killed over five people in the recent raids.

What is the current situation in the place?

The situation is tense. Like last Friday, Governor Gabriel Suswam of Benue State came and visited the area and promising to discuss with his counterpart in Ebonyi state and to see Mr. President on the best way to resolve the crisis. But it was even when the Governor came and left that the attacks became more persistent than before. Even this moment, as I am talking to you here, I have just received a phone call from Agila that the invaders are there and attacking my people.

How would you assess the level of destruction caused by the invaders?

The extent of damage is something that cannot be easily ascertained for now. But business and economic activities in the area have been paralyzed automatically. Children no longer go to school. People no longer go to church to worship, no more farm work. There is nothing like people going to the market. You have money in your pocket, but there is nothing to buy. Everything in that community has come to a standstill.

Have the attackers been burning houses too?

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Conversation of an Angry man

They have been burning houses and even churches. They set churches, houses and schools ablaze. They are causing destruction at all levels.

So what is your appeal to the government now?

I want to appeal to the federal and state governments and indeed all those concerned, both government and non-governmental organizations, religious groups that can come to the aid of Ado and Agila in particular, to put an end to this terrible crisis, because the thing has become so pathetic. The town has become a war zone.

What can you suggest as the likely things to be done to solve the problem permanently, because the crisis has persisted for decades now?

What I think will be the solution to the problem is that the boundary demarcation exercise in the affected community should be re-examined, because the boundary in the area is based on the old Western and Northern regions. Let them identify the place and go and put a beacon in that place. I think that will solve the problem.

In addition government should link Benue and Ebony states with a major road and a mobile police barracks at the buffer zone there. These will solve the problems.

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