



Regional Editor

## Pastor Dies In Gwari, Ukpilla Clash

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REPORTER, Minna

A pastor of a pentecostal church (name withheld) has died in a bloody clash between Gwari and Ukpilla communities in Gauraka town, Tarfa Local Government Area of Niger State.

The clash, it was allegedly caused following allegations of theft of handsets leveled against a Muslim from Ukpilla in Auchi Local Government Area of Edo State by another Muslim from the Gwari community.

Niger State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Mike Zuokumor, confirmed the death of the pastor in an interview with our correspondent in Minna on Wednesday. He said the theft of the handset was reported at the Gauraka Police Outpost prompting the police to act immediately by arresting and detaining the suspect.

He however said investigations into the cause of the crisis had commenced.

On what may have led to the death of the pastor, Zuokumor said the pastor, who was said to be a relation of the suspect, led a group popularly called "Ukpilla boys" to invade the residence of the complainant and manhandled the brother.

"After manhandling the brother of the complainant," the commissioner said, "the mob also went ahead and invaded the police outpost where the suspect was forcefully freed from Police custody."

The police chief said the complainant, who was not at home when the "Ukpilla boys" invaded, on hearing of the incident, mobilised his people and attacked the pastor in retaliation.

According to the police chief, the pastor died later at the Gwagwalada Hospital where he was rushed to for treatment.

Zuokumor stated that the police had already arrested four of the "Ukpilla boys," while the suspect and the complainant had fled the community, adding that the Police had commenced a manhunt for the two and other actors in the communal clash.

Speaking against the possibility of the crisis spreading to other parts of the state, Zuokumor advised residents of the area to go about their normal businesses as the police was in control of the situation.

To allay fear of possible reprisal attacks, the police commissioner urged the people to stop fleeing, adding that it had intensified measures to ensure protection of lives and properties of the people.