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Daily Independent (Lagos)

Nigeria: Two Killed, Houses Burnt in Lokoja Violence

4 August 2009

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Lagos — Lokoja erupted in violence on Monday, five days after troops quelled the religious uprising in the four Northern states of Bauchi, Borno, Kano, and Yobe, in which hundreds died and thousands were displaced.

Two persons were killed and scores of buildings burnt in Lokoja, where the Council Chairman, Yabagi Bologi, fled with his family, and other residents scampered for safety, as thugs unleashed terror on the city.

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The thugs, mostly youths from the Kabawa, Palace and Cantonment areas of the metropolis, were retaliating the death of one of them, called Suraj, who was murdered on Sunday night.

The casualty figure would have risen but for the intervention of policemen who had checkmated the rioters to restore relative peace.



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A source said trouble began late on Sunday when Suraj was killed by a rival thug from the Kabawa in a fight for supremacy.

But another account is that it was the fall-out of his earlier quarrel with the wife of Bologi.

The death of Suraj irked his friends who embarked on counter offensive by burning down homes in Kabawa before the police intervened.

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The Kabawa boys, as they are called, reportedly prevented the burial of Suraj, and attacked his grave digger, an action that fuelled the situation, resulting in the exchange of gun fire which led to the death of another person in the Nataco area.

The warring youths overran major streets from the early hours of Monday, setting on fire particularly the homes of those allegedly linked to the killing of Suraj.

Bologi fled with his family but not before the car of his mother was burnt down and an attempt made to raze the council secretariat.

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Information Commissioner, Tom Ohikere, condemned the incident, describing it as barbaric, and said the government would not fold its hands and watch such destruction.

He explained that it was not a religious crisis and that the situation has been brought under control.

More anti-riot police men have been put on the alert, he added, and warned trouble makers to stay clear of the streets.

In an unrelated development, a man slumped and died at the premises of the Lokoja Magistrate's Court on Monday as he came to process an affidavit for the screening of the military retirees.

The victim, believed to be a retired soldier, died immediately on hitting the ground.

His sudden death made the court officials to hurriedly close for the day, afraid

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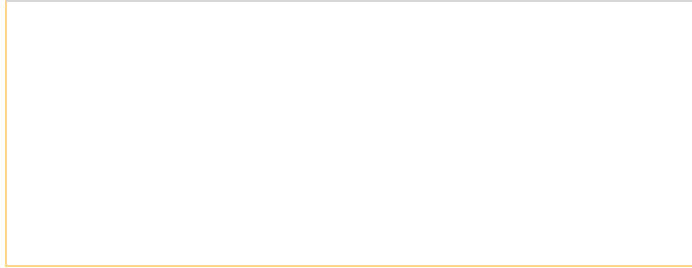
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