

Scores killed in Kwara communal clash

THERE was a resurgence of violence weekend in Offa and Erin-Ile, two neighbouring communities in Kwara State, where scores of people were killed and properties worth millions of naira destroyed last year.

The 2006 conflict was over land.

The police said the weekend violence had been contained and assured of the safety of lives and properties in the warring communities.

Spokesman for the Kwara police command, Mr. Gideon Markus, it was said, confirmed the development, but said there was no cause for alarm.

He said the command had waded into the matter and restored confidence between the warring parties, following what another security source described as mere rumour among a section of the populace.

A group from Erin-Ile, Obalufon New Era, however, added a new dimension to the story with alle-

From Blodun Oyeleye, Ilorin

gations that the permission granted to a local surveyor to work on the disputed land popularly called "Buffer Zone" was responsible for the renewed violence.

It asked President Umaru Yar'Adua to intervene in the case before it is too late. This allegation could however not be confirmed at the time of filing this report.

Security sources in Offa confirmed that there were rumours about a missing person. The police have intensified efforts at finding the man. "We are working together to find the man they claimed was missing", the source explained.

It was learnt that a meeting had also taken place between the police and the Transition Implementation Committee (TIC) chairman for Offa, Mr. Segun Olawoyin, as well as the traditional ruler of the town, Alhaji Mustapha Olanipekun.

There were also insinua-

tions that the renewed violence arose from the killing last week of a man, identified simply as Jimoh. He was said to be a former security man with the Federal Polytechnic, Offa.

There were unsubstantiated claims that the said deceased was killed on his farm in a town that shares boundary with Erin-Ile, creating the impression that his killers were from that town. But sources in Erin-Ile pointed out that it was false accusation as it would have been impossible to carry the body across Erin-Ile to the back of the polytechnic where it was found on Friday.

A statement by the Leader of Obalufon New Era, Chief Adebisi Olawuyi, alleged the fragile peace between the two communities was being threatened by government's position on the matter. The group asked for the release of the report by the panel that investigated last year's

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crisis.

The statement read "the order of government that both communities and their agents should refrain from using the disputed land is now being disregarded by the Offa people.

"They have not only gone back to the land to continue on their projects, they have also embarked on new projects in the area while the state government pretended not to see them.

"The Obalufon New Era rose from its emergency meeting and observed with disdain the attitude of the state government to instigate another round of carnage and assault on our area."