

War rages in Edo communities over land

• 12 dead, many homeless

BENIN

Nobody was spared in the bloody encounter, spearheaded by the youth of both communities.

For example, the in-law of former Board of Trustees Chairman of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Tony Anenih, Chief Johnson Emasealu was attacked by an angry mob between the war-torn communities. He was accused of allegedly fueling the crisis.

Emasealu, who is also seeking the council chairmanship position was beaten to coma and the windshield of his jeep smashed when Enwan youths accosted him in their village and held him hostage. They were said to have accused him of supplying ammunition to their "arch enemies" in Akuku.

He was, however, defended by Chief Apata.

"They engaged him very very seriously. He defended himself, but they could not see reasons with him and on the basis of that, they started attacking his vehicle. It was politically motivated. Emasealu is not an Akuku or Enwan person. He is an Uname.

"He has no connection with the crisis. By saying that he was giving Akuku people arms means that it is a campaign of calumny from the Enwan people and because one of their sons is also in the race (local government chairmanship); that

was the reason they now confronted him that he was supplying Akuku people ammunition, or guns," Apata explained.

He also said that Emasealu was not hospitalised, adding that he only went to the hospital for treatment and was not on admission.

Meanwhile, two Enwan youths were beaten to a state of unconsciousness because they tried to save Emasealu. Others who also helped are the Anna Smith family. They have made statements to the police, who are investigating the matter.

Emasealu was the Chairman of Post-Primary Education Board between 1999 and 2003 in the Lucky Igbinedion's administration.

He was also the Transition Chairman of the council and thereafter the elected chairman from 2003 to 2006. He is seeking reelection.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the Tuesday battle, the late Mr. Sunday Joshua, a worker of the State Water Board, who just resumed his posting at Afuze from Ojirami Dam as district manager was gruesomely murdered in his bid to cross Enwan to Igarra, the administrative headquarters of the local government.

Besides, it was learnt that about seven Akuku women and two Enwan men were killed in the crisis. Reason: they were accused of always divulging information to their fatherland from their matrimonial homes, it was gath-

ered.

Some of the women are the late Mrs Kehinde Okhemukhoko (nee Iyogun), whose husband is Mr. Emmanuel Okhemukhoko, a teacher at the Okhumah Education Centre, Enwan, and Mrs Malomo James, whose husband is Mr. Ifiway (aka *If Way Dey*).

It was further learnt that Akuku community overran Enwan, while scores of the residents have escaped to Igarra to take refuge with well-wishers and family friends.

It was gathered that the police had ordered the arrest of those who allegedly killed five Akuku indigenes on August 28.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Peter Ogboi said he is aware of the crisis, added that the violence has been brought under control.

On August 28, the festering land dispute claimed no fewer than five persons, while many houses were destroyed in the clash that lasted for one week.

It was learnt that the crisis erupted when four Akuku persons were allegedly apprehended on their way back to their village from Joe Works, a quarrying site in Igarra, and subsequently killed by their assailants.

Report also had it that one of them was taken to Igarra market square and burnt to ashes.

In the ensuing battle, many houses were destroyed in both communities.

Many persons were also kidnapped before the police intervened.

THEY had lived peacefully as neighbours for decades during which they intermarried. Today, the story is different.

The neighbouring communities of Enwan and Akuku in the Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State are no longer friends. In fact, they have continued to kill and maim themselves, including their wives, over a parcel of land.

When they clashed last Tuesday, over the parcel of land, measuring 1, 044 acres, being part of the Igarra Cattle Ranch de-acquired by the state government and released to communities which originally owned them in September 1991, no fewer than 12 persons were feared dead and 18 others hospitalised.

Since the crisis broke out, the guns have boomed endlessly. Besides the dead and the injured, many have also been rendered homeless.

Delta to DESOPADEC: sustain free medical care

From Shola O' Neil

WARRI

DELTA State government has asked the State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC) to sustain its