

Three killed in Ebonyi, Cross River communal clash

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Three persons have been reportedly killed and property valued at millions of naira destroyed in a fresh clash between Azuofia-Edda community in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State and their Obubra community in Cross River State neighbours.

It was gathered that the seven villages in Obubra armed their warriors with guns and invaded Azuofia-Edda community.

A source in the community, who pleaded not to be named, said the attack was a reprisal against Azuofia-Edda residents for their alleged killing of an Obubra commercial motorcycle operator.

Also, residents of Azuofia-Edda community have urged the Federal Government to set up a commission of enquiry into the clash.

In a statement in Abakaliki, the Ebonyi State by two youth leaders from the community, Obinna Udenwe and Chinedu Nwasum, the people traced the origin of the January 13 attack to a dispute over an alleged beheading of a motorcycle operator from Obubra area in a Cross River village by suspected assailants.

The youth leaders recalled that residents of Edda, who were fingered by their Obubra neighbours in the alleged killing, were peace-loving.

They said the people had been living in peace with their neighbouring Cross River communities since 1984 when the last attack occurred.

They said: "After several efforts by the elites from Abakaliki, on January 12, Obubra residents assured their counterparts from the Abakaliki that there would be no crisis. They agreed to a meeting in Abakaliki to settle the problem. But unknown to the people of Abakaliki, it was a plot to set them off their guard and attack on Friday morning – the Friday the supposed peace talk was to hold."

The spokesmen said elders from Azuofia-Edda of Abakaliki and their elites made efforts to placate Obubra residents that they did not behead the motorcyclist.

The duo listed the peace efforts as: "inviting them to a roundtable meeting, suggesting travelling to their village to swear to an oath of innocence, inviting their elites and government stakeholders to talk to the elites of Obubra, among others, shows that the people of Azuofia-Edda in Abakaliki are peace lovers".

They said: "Let it be noted that the only route accessible to the over seven villages of Obubra, which came on the attack, passes through Azuofia-Edda community. If Abakaliki residents had planned attacking them, as they alleged, they would have done so while they passed through their road everyday to access the Nwida Market, the Abakaliki Rice Mill and the markets in Abakaliki, Enugu, Onitsha and the rest of the country.

"The electricity being enjoyed in Obubra villages was installed by Abakaliki Local Government and the roads being used by these aggressive villagers in Obubra were built by Abakaliki Local Government."

The spokesmen for Azuofia-Edda added: "When the attack happened, the people of Azuofia-Edda in Abakaliki were taken unawares because while the aggressors prepared for the attack and informed Abakaliki residents that they would avenge their son, Abakaliki people never believed them – for they had lived in peace, inter-married, farmed together and attended each other's festivals since 1984 that these Obubra villagers last attacked Abakaliki residents."