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Fulani/Yoruba clash

Written by Tunde Ogunesan | Wednesday, 08 January 2014 00:00 | font size | Print | Email

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IF not for the intervention of the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi III, last week's killing of a middle-aged Fulani cattle rearer, Aliu Shehu, in Towotowo and Soku villages, along Iseyin road, in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State, would have snowballed into another communal crisis.

According to investigation by the Nigerian Tribune, Shehu, 20, was leading some cattle in his flock round a farmland very close to Towotowo village, when he was challenged by a Yoruba farmer (names withheld) for rearing his cattle on his farmland.

Sources further revealed that the suspect, who is now at large, challenged Shehu and his assistant, leading to exchange of words before Shehu was shot and his partner injured in the process.

Shehu's assistant was said to have fled the scene of the incident with head injury, as he ran to their huts to inform the Fulani community of the development.

The Fulani community, however, reported the case at Ojongbodu police station, leading to the arrest of eight suspects.

The traditional head of Sooku village, Chief David Ogungbemiro, who had been bed-ridden for almost three years, confirmed the incident to the Nigerian Tribune, but said he only relied on privileged information. But his son, Solomon, added that the town was deserted for fear of being attacked, "considering previous experiences, no one wanted to be caught unawares."

Solomon further added that the Alaafin of Oyo summoned the head of the Fulani community, Alhaji Arod Jare Bature, to Oyo, to forestall breakdown of law and order, as well as urged him to calm his people from avenging the death of their kinsmen and allow the security agency to complete investigation.

The intervention of the royal father stemmed the tide of things, as Alhaji Bature said he (Fulani) respected the Alaafin so much that he had to caution their kinsmen to allow peace reign.

In an interview with the Nigerian Tribune, Bature regretted that "they used to experience attacks from Yoruba farmers' community during dry season," saying the recent one which claimed the live of Shehu was unexpected.

Bature, who said despite the death of one of his people, the Fulani community still remained calm, appealing to the Yoruba community not to exercise any fear because "the Alaafin relates with us as his children and has been objective in handling of cases between the Yorubas and Fulanis.

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"We don't have any reason to disobey him, though we know if it had been the other way round, it would have been disastrous, as Yorubas would have been attacking every Fulani on sight."

Reacting, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi described the incident as unfortunate, but lauded the Fulani community for their maturity.

While appealing to the Fulani community on the death of their colleague, he urged the farmers to shun violence and eschew bitterness.

"Yoruba adage says you don't go to court and still be friends. So, we applied the traditional system of governance in handling the case. We owe our subjects the responsibility of coexistence, despite the diversity in our country.

"While we are awaiting the outcome of police investigation, I also use this medium to appeal to all stakeholders not to overblow this matter."

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