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## 18 feared dead as rival cult groups clash in Benue (/18-feared-dead-as-rival-cult-groups-clash-in-benue)

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Only three were killed —Police

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NO fewer than 18 persons have been reportedly killed in two days of bloody clashes between rival cult groups in Otukpo, the trade-political seat of Idomaland of Benue State.

Nigerian Tribune learnt that the crisis, which started on Saturday behind Saint Francis College (Ogwonuigbahapa), following a supremacy tussle between two rival cult groups, later spread to Oiji Street, Sabon-Gari and Ojira areas of the town.

According to an eyewitness, "it all started like a joke, when young men were initially throwing fireworks at one another, but within a short time, they pulled out guns and it became uncontrollable.

"For two days, young men residing around Saint Francis College (Ogwonuigbahapa), Oiji street, Sabon-Gari and Ojira engaged each other in a battle to control the town."

Corroborating the story, the Secretary General of the Opiatoha K'Idoma, an umbrella body of Idoma sons and daughters, Chief Adoka Adaji, who condemned the bloody crisis and the resultant killings, urged security agencies to check further escalation of the crisis.

When contacted, the Benue State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Moses Yamu, said the police recorded three deaths in the crisis.

"We can confirm three deaths, another three with gunshot wounds, while eight persons were arrested, four locally made pistols also recovered," he said.