

16 feared killed in cults clash in Akwa Ibom

Udeme Utip | Uyo

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AT least, 16 persons have been feared killed following three days supremacy clashes by rival cults involving the Klaans and the Black Axe confraternities in Nsukara Offot, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State capital.

Investigation by *Tribune* revealed that the cult groups engaged each other over the control of mini bus parks in the state capital, over toll collections.

Most of the affected areas include the adjoining areas of Idu, in Uruan Local Government Area, where the crises started before spreading to the local communities of Use Offot, Ekpri Nsukara, and Oniong communities in Uyo LGA. Sixteen persons and properties worth millions of naira are said to have been destroyed in the yet-to-be contained violence.

It was learnt that the trouble started when the two confraternities engaged each other in a fierce fight on Sun-

day, over alleged encroachment into some parks earmarked for a different group to collect the parking tolls, forcing angry reaction from the opposing group.

Narrating their ordeals, Nora Iwang, a native of the area and one Aniefiok Usen, both residents around the Nwanibba area, the main epicentre of the cults fight, lamented that they had to sleep with relations and friends outside the area, following distress calls from terrified neighbours around the Udo Ekpo Nkpo Street.

"Thank God, I finally arrived my house this morning (Tuesday) after my friends called me Monday evening to sleep elsewhere and not to return for fear of being killed by the rampaging armed hoodlums," Iwang lamented.

"My wife called me at about 7:50 pm on Monday that I should not return home because of ongoing killings around my area in Udo Ekpo Nkpo Street

and the adjoining areas of Nwanibba, Ekpri Nsukara, Eniong Offot and Use Offot communities. I had to take refuge at my sister's place off Abak road till this morning (Tuesday)," Usen said.

"Throughout these last three days, we've been staying indoors from 6:00pm because of the fight and the police operatives would only mount the guard on major roads, harrasing ordinary unarmed civilians without going into the villages to confront the real culprits," another resident, who identified herself as Emem Duncan, said.

Eight persons, checks revealed, were slaughtered in Use Offot, and over 10 others killed in Anua, Ekpri Nsukara and Oniong communities, while several others have been hospitalised in various hospitals with varying degrees of injuries.

However, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Odiko Macdon, who confirmed the killings,

said only four people were killed, assuring that "the Commissioner of Police (CP), Olatoye Durosinmi, is miffed at the disruption of public order and safety by two rival cult groups at Anua Offot and Use Offot, both at Nwaniba, in Uyo Local Government Area, leading to the loss of lives.

"The CP condemned in strong terms the wanton destruction of lives and has vowed to bring perpetrators to book; hence, he has deployed tactical resources to restore order and fish out the perpetrators.

"The CP has, therefore, called on residents of the said communities and Uyo to go about their lawful businesses without fear of molestation and be assured of their safety because of strategies emplaced.

"He has sent a clear warning to perpetrators of these dastardly acts to desist forthwith or face the dire consequences of their actions," MacDon stated.