

## Two killed following boundary dispute in Ondo communities

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TWO persons have been confirmed dead, while several others were injured following communal clashes that broke out among Owake, Oka Odo and Ebo communities of Akoko South West Local Government Area of Ondo State, over boundary dispute.

The renewed clashes among the three communities were linked to the erection of a signpost by residents of Owake community on Ikun Akoko road following an Appeal Court judgment that confirmed the community's ownership of the disputed land.

Following the erection of the signpost, the people of Owake community were said to have been ambushed and attacked on their way back by suspected thugs, leaving many injured.

The development resulted in a reprisal, which led to the destruction of properties, including homes and community structures, with the clashes extending to Oka-Odo community.

The clashes escalated on Sunday night when suspected hoodlums allegedly invaded Ebo community.

According to a source, several properties were torched, including a house belonging to a community leader, Mr Omorinbola Francis.

The source added that the palace of the Asin of Oka-Odo, and a nearby events hall were also completely destroyed.

The source said: "Oka-Odo community was attacked on Sunday night by suspected hoodlums from Ebo community."

"Both the palace and the events hall have been destroyed, and several houses were also set ablaze. Sadly, a community leader, Omorinbola Francis's house was among those razed to the ground, and attempts to put out the fire were unsuccessful."

He said some residents, who sustained injuries were rushed to the newly-inaugurated Federal Medical Centre in Iworo-Oka for treatment.

The state police command confirmed the clashes in the three communities and called for peace among the

youth.

In a statement signed by the State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Funmi Odunlami, the Commissioner of Police, Wilfred Afolabi, urged all parties involved to sheathe their swords, saying violence and property destruction would only result in stagnation and underdevelopment.

The police boss said: "The clashes started on January 12, when youths from Oka-Odo went on a hunting expedition and were allegedly attacked by youths from Ebo community."

"The Ebo youths were said to have mistaken them for individuals from Owake, with whom they have an unresolved land dispute."

"In retaliation, Oka-Odo youths mobilised and invaded Ebo community, leading to incidents of arson."

"The conflict led to casualties on both sides, with two persons dead, while the injured are currently receiving treatment in the hospital."

Odunlami explained that police team, led by the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP Operations), had been deployed in the area to restore peace and prevent further escalation.

"The CP urges the communities to seek peaceful resolutions to their disputes to avoid further loss of lives and property, while assuring residents that the police would ensure that the perpetrators of violence are brought to justice," the PPRO said.

Meanwhile, the lawmaker representing Akoko South/East and South/West Federal Constituency, Honourable Gboyega Adefarati, has appealed to the people of the three communities to give peace a chance.

Adefarati, in a statement signed by his media aide, Oluwole Ehinola, expressed shock over the news of the communal clashes.

In his message to the warring communities, Adefarati appealed to the youth to sheathe their swords and give peace a chance.

The lawmaker also called on security agents, traditional and religious leaders to intervene and ensure quick rapprochement among the warring communities.