

Students flee campus as communal fight escalates

**Ofonime Umanah,
Calabar**

NO fewer than 1,000 students of the Bebi campus of the Federal College of Education in Cross River State have fled the campus following continued fighting between the local community and the neighbouring Vandekiya village in Benue State.

The institution's provost, Mr. Joseph Effiom Edem-Ntibi, told our correspondent in a telephone interview on Thursday that the college was, however, making alternative arrangements for the students to take their lectures in the main campus in Obudu, as it was becoming glaring that the students might not be able to return to Bebi soon.

Our correspondent learnt that signals of the clash emerged last week.

By Wednesday, our correspondent learnt, up to 60 people were feared dead in the two communities, including a middle-aged man who was said to have been dismembered.

It was difficult to know who actually fired the first shot, but our correspondent learnt on Thursday that the casualty rate had continued to increase.

The provost who confirmed the predicament of his students pleaded with the police and the state government to take urgent steps to move into the area to ensure that peace returned, saying that his students were the worst hit.

"Our students have fled that area, but none of them was killed. We have three sets of students there. The population of that campus should be about 1,000. The government of Cross River and Benue states ought to have intervened in the matter by now.

"I am surprised that soldiers and riot policemen have not been sent to the place. The government should do something about this matter, he concluded.

The outgoing police commissioner, Mr. Danlami Yar'Adua, who confirmed to our correspondent on the telephone that fighting was still going on in the area, however, said he was not aware of the casualty figure.