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Bloodbath in P'Harcourt again, 10 feared dead

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More than 10 persons were feared dead and scores of others injured on Saturday during a renewed war between rival cult groups in some parts of Port Harcourt, Rivers State.



River State Governor, Hon. Rotimi Amaechi

The clash, which erupted in Abonnema, the headquarters of Asari Toru Local Government Area last week, moved to Port Harcourt in the early hours of Friday.

A source said the fight was between the leader of the Outlaws, Mr. Sogboma George, and his counterpart in the Niger Delta Strike Force, Mr. Fara Dagogo.

During the fierce combat in Kalabari, one soldier and an unspecified number of persons were killed, while residents of the area fled their homes.

But as the fighting shifted to Port Harcourt, some of the waterfront settlements in the Old Township came under heavy bombardment by members of the warring groups.

A source said sounds of gunshots were heard from the distant creeks on Friday, but later the gunmen appeared from the waterfronts and rained bullets on neighbouring areas.

He said some of the areas where the gunmen fought each other included Bende Street, Ibadan Street, Borokiri and Degema Waterside areas.

He said that over 10 persons might have been shot dead during the fighting, which started at about 7pm and continued till the early hours of Saturday.

The source said the gunmen withdrew from the affected areas when troops and policemen moved in to restore order.

He said, "The shooting started on Friday. We were hearing it from afar in the creeks. But in the evening and throughout the night, the town was reverberating with heavy gunshots.

"A lot of people fled the Old Township to other secure areas of the city but those, who could not leave early enough, locked themselves inside their houses.

"So many people might have been killed in the night, but we cannot tell the exact number."

A security source said the camp of Ebere Papa, one of the staunch supporters of Dagogo, located in Obonoma/Miniama, Akuku Toru LGA, was burnt down by persons suspected to be George's supporters.

Papa, a former strongman of the Outlaws, had, after a serious disagreement with George parted ways and aligned with the NDSF leader.

The attack on his stronghold, the source said, might have been a fallout of his involvement in the current war on the side of Fara, during which a number of George's supporters were killed.

A senior staff of a hospital located in Mile One area of Port Harcourt disclosed that 16 persons with gunshot injuries were brought into the facility in the night.

Out of the number, he said one person had died, while the hospital was still battling to save the lives of the remaining 15 casualties.

When contacted on the telephone, the JTF spokesman, Lt. Col. Sagir Musa confirmed the fighting by the cult groups.

He, however, said that a corpse was found floating near the NPA dockyard after a clash between government troops and one of the cult groups at the yard.

He said, "Nobody can tell you how many people were killed because the incident happened in the night.

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"But our troops had moved into the NPA dockyard, Bundu Waterside and Nembe Waterside to stop them from extending the fighting to these areas.

"Part of our mandate is to stop the inflow of illegal arms and as soon as we hear gunshots, we move into such areas immediately.

"What happened is an inter-cult clash which started earlier in the week. People from the Fara group were moving towards those areas to kill members of the Sogboma group."

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