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Four feared killed in Imo clashes

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Four persons have been feared killed in a conflict between youths of Asaa community in the oil-producing Ohaji Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State.

It was gathered that the four people were killed during a disagreement involving the election of the leaders of a youth association in the community.

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According to a source, who spoke on condition of anonymity to our correspondent on the telephone on Monday, fighting broke out when a faction resisted attempts to inaugurate the new executive.

While members of one of the factions insisted that those pressing to be inaugurated were not elected, their opponents insisted that as elected leaders of the association, they had to be inaugurated.

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Our correspondent gathered that efforts by the Ohaji Egbema Division of the Nigeria Police to nip the crisis in the bud were unsuccessful as the two factions engaged in a fight, which led to the killing of four youths.

The source said that dangerous weapons such as dane guns, matchets, knives and charms were freely used in the fight.

However, it was not clear if the police arrested any of the youths.

In a separate incident, several houses and properties were razed in Akannu in Umuakpu community of the same local government in the early hours of Monday.

It was gathered that the crisis in Akannu was caused by a lingering intra-communal feud caused by the death of a woman in the community.

According to a villager's account of the story, some members of the village accused a man of being the killer of the woman while his relatives insisted that he had no hand in her killing.

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The disagreements over the issue had led to killing of an unspecified number of people last month with several buildings razed.

With the two recorded incidents in the oil-producing community, oil production activities were said to have come under threat.

Our correspondent also gathered that the police had deployed riot policemen to the area to prevent further breakdown of law and order.

But the Sole Administrator of Ohaji/Egbema Local Government, Mr. Chonnoyen Ikegwuruka, said on the telephone that only two people were killed at Asaa.

He said that the state government had taken steps to ensure the restoration of law and order in the area, stressing also that there was no threat to oil companies in the area.

He also said that the crisis in Akannu was caused by the existence of a faction in the community, which claimed that they were the original indigenes of the area, to the consternation of the other group.

He said, "I don't believe four people were killed. The figure was not clear to me. They burnt down houses.

"Right now, we are on it. Even today, there were two killings in Asa in Ohaji, and it is because of this youths' election.

"One faction is saying that they have conducted election, the other faction went to do inauguration and there was violence. The DPO in Umuakpo arrested the situation but two of the youths were killed.

"The Akannu issue is an issue of one faction saying they are indigenes and others are not indigenes, leading to the crisis.

"Government is on it, we have stationed mobile policemen at Akannu and Asa to arrest the situation We are on top of the problem. Nothing will lead to the disruption of oil production activities. The police are already stationed there."

When our correspondent contacted the Imo State Police Commissioner, Mr. Mr. Aloysious Okorie, he did not pick

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