

Seven killed in Kwara, cultists sack 17 Rivers towns

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Seven persons were killed on Sunday in a communal clash in Share, Ifelodun Local Government Area and Tsaragi in Edu LGA of Kwara State, while a train crushed three persons in Ilorin, the state capital.

Also, gunmen, suspected to be cultists overran 17 communities in Rivers State, after rival cult groups engaged themselves in bloody clashes.

Four persons were killed in the Kwara communal clash between the people of Share and Tsaragi.

A police station in Share and five Hilux vans were also burnt on Sunday while five policemen were injured by the irate neighbours.

A source in one of the warring communities confirmed that four persons were killed in the bloody clash.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, he added that scores of people had also been injured since Saturday when the renewed hostilities started.

Meanwhile, a detachment of soldiers from the 22 Armoured Brigade of the Nigerian Army, Sobi Barracks, Ilorin, were on Sunday deployed in the area to quell the clashes and restore normalcy.

The Kwara State Governor, Alhaji Abdulfatah Ahmed, is from Share community.

Though, the state government and the Brigade's Public Relations Officer, Weri Finikumor, confirmed the deployment of troops, he declined to reveal the number of soldiers sent.

A source in one of the warring communities, who did not want to be named, said no fewer than 100 soldiers had been sighted in the troubled areas.

Finikumor, in a telephone interview with our correspondent, said the soldiers were deployed to

complement other security operatives already drafted to the area to prevent further escalation of the hostilities and to restore normalcy to the area.

He said, "We have sent our soldiers there. We cannot give you the number of soldiers deployed, but we have sent a lot of soldiers. I do not have information that people died."

The state government, in a statement on Sunday by the Secretary to the Kwara State Government, Alhaji Isiaka Gold, said following the current communal clashes between Share and Tsaragi communities, the state government had declared a 24-hour curfew in both communities.

The government warned that anyone found with illegal arms and ammunition or otherwise found disrupting the peace and public order in both communities would be dealt with in line with the laws of the land.

Gold stated that while other security agencies, particularly the police, the Department of State Services and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, were already on the ground, a detachment of the Nigerian Army had been drafted to ensure compliance with the curfew and the maintenance of peace in the communities.

He assured the people of the government's preparedness to deploy all lawful measures to ensure the welfare and security of all citizens.

He said the full weight of the law would be brought to bear on anyone or group found inciting trouble in any part of the state, no matter how highly placed.

The state government had, some years ago, established a buffer zone in the borders of the two communities to forestal violence.

A source explained that fresh crisis erupted in the two communities after some Share community leaders expressed fears that trees, which were used as a buffer between the two communities, could be converted by criminals to their hideouts.

They were said to have directed that the trees should be cut down by the youth.

The source said members of Tsaragi kicked against the cutting down of the trees.

The disagreement was said to have led to a violent confrontation between the two neighbours.

Police personnel in one of the warring communities, who were said to have attempted to quell the initial crisis, were reportedly overwhelmed.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Kwara State Police Command, Mr. Ajayi Okasanmi, said he had no report of any casualty, adding that police officers were still on the ground to address the situation.

Okasanmi stated that the state government rightly declared the curfew to restore calm.

He also said the police, the army and other security agencies were working together to restore law and order in the troubled communities.

Also on Sunday, a train crushed three persons in a car in Ilorin.

Our correspondent gathered that the train was on its way from the North, heading for Offa, Offa Local Government Area of the State.

The three victims were said to be having a chat in the wound-up Toyota Camry, which was said to have been parked at a rail crossing at the Kulendu area of Zango in Ilorin.

Passersby were said to have shouted at the occupants, warning them of an impending danger.

An eyewitness, who identified himself as Taiwo Olorontoba, said because the three occupants were chatting in the wound-up car, they did not hear the alarm raised by the passersby as the train approached.

He explained that before the frightened people could bang on the car, the train closed in, forcing the passersby to beat a retreat from the rail crossing area.

He added that the train rammed into the vehicle, crushing the three occupants.

According to him, the remains of the victims were deposited at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital mortuary.

The Kwara State Sector Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps, Mr. Sunday Maku, confirmed the crash, warning motorists to be safety conscious and avoid preventable carnages on the road.

He said, "I am aware of the accident. Motorists and other road users should be more safety conscious."

In Rivers State, armed cult groups sacked indigenes of about 17 communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The rival cult groups were said to have unleashed mayhem in the area, forcing indigenes to flee their homes and moved en masse to neighbouring communities to avoid being killed.

It was gathered that a disagreement between two cult groups had degenerated into killing and maiming of people in some of the communities that made up the local government area.

The situation had caused the youths of Egi Clan to demonstrate in Port Harcourt and draw the attention of security agencies in the state to the violence in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA.

An indigene of one of the affected communities, who identified himself as Charles, said about six persons were killed on Friday when two rival cult groups clashed in the area.

Charles identified some of the affected communities as Erema, Obite, Akabuka, Obukegi, Obiosomiri, Oboburu, Obiwedi, Ede, Itum and Ohali, adding that business in ONELGA had stopped since the escalation of the cult war.

He added, "The crisis can only be described as a cult war that has just escalated. Innocent people are being threatened every day. Three days ago (Friday), about six persons were killed.

"As I speak with you, there is no business going on in the affected communities as people are moving to nearby villages and neighbouring communities to avoid being killed in the crossfire. The situation made my people to demonstrate in Port Harcourt recently.

"Two police stations are in the area; one in Obite and that of SARS in Erema. But with the presence of these police stations, the violence occur even in broad day light."

He, however, called on the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Solomon Arase, to send a special police

squad to the troubled area, adding that the Nigerian Army should also deploy soldiers in the area to protect lives and property.

Earlier, the leader of the group that protested in Port Harcourt as a result of the increasing level of violence in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA, Mr. Promise Ege, said residents had abandoned their homes due to the crisis.

“The rival cult groups are not only engaging in killing, they come to rob. They are not interested whether you are a cult member or not. If you don’t have money, they shoot you, kill your wife, rape your wife and go away.

“Now we are saying we are all Egi people and they are our brothers and sisters. We don’t want further killings. We want this crisis to end. We want our people to have peace, because we are known in this land as peace loving people,” Ege said.

Also, the deputy leader of the youth group that protested against continued killings in Egi Clan, Mr. Walter Odede, said, “From Monday up to now, they have killed up to 50 people. Surprisingly, no arrest has been made since the killings started on Monday. The security agencies should wake up; the government should wake up.”

However, the Chairman of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA, Chief Augustine Ahiamadu, has imposed a dusk to dawn curfew in the area as a result of the killings and destruction of property in some communities within the area.

Efforts made by our correspondent to get the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Ahmad Mohammad, to react to the situation proved futile as several calls and a text message to his mobile phone did not yield any response.

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