

One killed, houses razed in C'River communal clash

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Mudiaga Affe, Calabar

At least one person was killed on Monday while two others sustained bullet injuries following hostilities between indigenes of New Netim and Odukpani towns in the Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Over 20 houses and several vehicles were reportedly burnt in New Netim during the incident which occurred at about 1am.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the house of the head of New Netim, Chief Raphael Ita, was razed.

The village head, who is the father of the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Ben Ayade, Mr. Christian Ita, reportedly fled for his life.

It was gathered that the two communities had a dispute over the farmland used mainly for the cultivation of okra.

An indigene of New Netim, Solomon Nya, said, "On Monday, at about 1am, the people of Odukpani invaded New Netim. They hired cult members to attack the village. They razed about 20 houses. They also burnt several cars. One boy was killed. Two others were shot, but they survived the attack.

“There is a dispute over ownership of the farmland and the matter went to court. New Netim won the case. The Odukpani people were not happy with the outcome. This is the second attack in about 10 months. They did something like this in December 2015.

“On August 24, this year, New Netim council wrote to security chiefs, alerting them to credible information they had that there was a plan to attack them. The security chiefs called the two communities together, but the Odukpani denied that there was such a plan. Look at what has happened now.”

Many residents had reportedly fled both communities as security agencies had beefed up patrols in the areas.

Reacting to the development, the Security Adviser to the Governor, Mr. Jude Ngaji, said the destruction took place in less than one hour, adding that those who carried out the act had vacated the New Netim community before the arrival of security operatives.

“It started at about 1am to 1.30am and immediately we got the call, we deployed security men there. Before the men got there, the damage had already been done. The security agencies responded immediately, led by an Assistant Commissioner of Police.

“For now, the area is calm as security agents have been deployed in the area. We are asking everybody to go about their normal duties, as the police and soldiers have taken over the place in terms of security.

“All the people involved in what happened would be arrested because it was premeditated. People hide under land issues to commit crimes. We will get to the root of it and all the masterminds of this mayhem would be brought to justice,” he said.

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