

11 died, seven missing in Egun, Yoruba clash – Residents

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Some of the razed structures

Olaleye Aluko

No fewer than seven residents of Otodo Gbame, an Egun community in the Lekki Phase 1 area of Lagos State, are missing after a clash between the residents and some Yoruba youths, alleged to be land grabbers.

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Our correspondent learnt that on Saturday, three corpses of residents, believed to have jumped into a river during the crisis, floated as residents also claimed that a total of 11 persons had lost their lives in the clash.

PUNCH Metro was told that the missing residents were Akuwayon Mawewang, Jeremiah Abode, Babajide Jinu, Hunu Agonbabo, Tenseme Fofeyon, Auyiho Mawugi and Temidire Aishat.

Nine of the corpses recovered by residents from a river in the community were identified as Babajide Tosihun, Mfinrinfo Esinfo, Sosu Abosede, a pregnant woman, Bose Alade, one John, Thoto Avonba, Sesinu Ahiaboji, Hosu Wejede and Mawuyon Oviawe.

Our correspondent had reported on Thursday that no fewer than 200 structures were burnt in the community during a clash between some Egun and Yoruba youths.

It was reported that the crisis started penultimate Sunday when the Yoruba youths demanded that the Egun community should relocate from the area.

Policemen from the Area J Command, Ajah, and the Rapid Response Squad, Ikeja, were said to have stormed the area to restore peace.

Speaking with *PUNCH Metro* on Sunday, a resident, Stephen Emmanuel, who lost two of his children, Maryam and Samuel Emmanuel, said the deceased jumped into the river while escaping from the rampaging youths.

Emmanuel, a commercial driver, said, “I was at work when they called me on the telephone that there was trouble in the community. My two children were trying to escape from the fire and jumped into the river. That was how they drowned. We recovered their corpses the following day.”

The Egun community youths leader, Norbet Abraham, said, “There are seven people that we have not seen. On Saturday, we recovered three more corpses. As we were taking them away from the river, some youths accompanied by policemen stopped us at about 10.30am and started shooting, forcing us to abandon the corpses and flee.

“There are 11 deceased so far, including a pregnant woman and two children. Some powerful persons have paid the police to ensure that we are shut out and they do not allow us into the community. Our community leader is also in custody. He is being held at the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department in Panti, Yaba.”

A resident, who gave his name only as Solomon, said, “We have not seen some of our friends; we do not know whether they are dead or alive. Some residents have fled to their relations in the Baiyeku and Oko Agbon areas. The policemen are still on our land. They are threatening us and asking us to leave.”

The Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, SP Dolapo Badmos, said the police had restored normalcy to the area, and the suspects arrested in the violence had been charged to court.

She added that the police did not have a record of any casualty, urging the residents to report to the police, “and stop their hearsays.”

She said, “Anyone with reliable report should come forward with it, and the command will investigate and deal with it decisively. The command does not have any report of death or missing person. The police do not rely on hearsays. Hearsays are not admissible in court.”

An Amnesty International researcher, Morayo Adebayo, who was at the Egun community, said the AI had urged the state government to investigate the fire and demolition that left the residents homeless.

She said, “The Lagos State government must take immediate steps to provide alternative accommodation for as many as 30,000 people who were made homeless in direct contravention of a court order, after their homes were deliberately set ablaze.

“AI confirmed with the Public Relations Officer of a Lagos State agency that the agency was part of the demolition team sent to Otodo Gbame. The AI is calling for an immediate end to destruction of any house in the Otodo Gbame and neighbouring waterfront areas.”