

Four killed, 11 injured as violence rocks Taraba festival

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Justin Tyopuusu, Jalingo

No fewer than four persons were killed, while 11 others sustained varying degrees of injury on Saturday when a cultural festival turned bloody in the Karim Lamido Local Government Area of Taraba State.

An eyewitness, identified simply as Abigail, told our correspondent that trouble started when a youth leader tried to prevent the soldiers who were deployed to provide security at the festival from standing in front of a shrine.

Minhu, which is a hunting festival, is celebrated annually every first week of May.

Despite the ban on public gathering by the state government, the locals had insisted on holding the festival.

“We had finished all the rituals and those marching from the river side and those dancing from the market square had gathered and we were about to disperse when we noticed a commotion.

“The soldiers were with us and possibly got tired and had gone up in front of the masquerade at the shrine to rest but were prevented by some youths.

“When the youth leader asked the soldiers to leave the area, they resisted. He brought a used tyre and threatened to injure the soldiers.

“One of the soldiers shot into the air but was disarmed by the youth leader. That was what angered the other soldiers who shot indiscriminately, killing two people instantly while two others were killed by stray bullets,” Abigail said.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, ASP David Misal, had earlier told journalists that the incident occurred when the security agents went to enforce the lockdown after the locals insisted on going ahead with the festival.