

# One killed, houses burnt in Benue communal clash

John Charles, Makurdi

**O**NE person has been killed and several houses burnt in a renewed fight between Mbasombo and Mbaivur communities of Ikpayongo in the Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State.

The two communities had been embroiled in crisis for years. The Tuesday attack, it was learnt, was triggered by the killing of a young man in his farm last Friday.

It was gathered that the Mbaivur people, on reprisal mission, invaded Mbasombo community in the early hours of Tuesday, setting several houses on fire.

An indigene of Mbaivur, who spoke to our correspondent on condition of anonymity on Tuesday, explained that the Mbaivur had earlier demanded that Mbasombo people fish out the killers of the young man.

"As of this (Tuesday) morning, the Mbasombo people were not able to produce those who killed the young farmer. So, the Mbaivur people went on reprisal attack," the resident said.

According to the resident, five Mbaivur people had been killed before the killing of the young farmer last Friday.

The corpses were kept in the mortuary and when this man was killed in his farm last Friday, Mbaivur people removed the other corpses from the mortuary and went and bury them," the witness said.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer in Benue State, Catherine Anene, confirmed Tuesday incident, saying several houses were torched.

The PPRO, however, said no life was lost.

"Yes, there was a crisis in the area; several houses were burnt but policemen have been dispatched to the area to maintain peace," Anene said.

Meanwhile, the police have arrested 21 suspected arsonists in connection with the weekend crisis between Ibila and Oju communities in Oju Local Government Area of the state.

It was gathered that the purported location of a proposed foreign university was at the centre of the crisis between the two communities.

Parading the suspected arsonists on Tuesday on behalf of the Commissioner of Police, Aliwari Okoro, the PPRO described the scale of damage done by the suspected arsonists as massive.

"These people were found at the scene of the incident, setting houses ablaze and the command will not allow anyone to take the law into their hands. The CP has directed that the suspects be charged to court as soon as possible," he declared.