

# Two suspects arrested over Bayelsa communal killing

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By Daniels Igoni

The Bayelsa State Police Command has confirmed that two persons have been arrested in connection with the killing of two men in Monday's violent clash involving the Opolo and Okutukutu communities in the Yenagoa Local Government Area of the state.

The spokesperson for the command, ASP Musa Mohammed, said this in a release titled, 'Okutukutu/Opolo crisis,' which our correspondent obtained on Tuesday.

He said, "One Chief Ekezie Gabriel 'M' came to the Control Room and reported that two persons were found lifeless at Opolo. The youths of Opolo claimed they were murdered by Okutukutu youths who invaded their community.

"Upon receipt of the information, 10 patrol teams from various tactical units were dispatched with a phantom drone to monitor and contain the situation during which the patrol teams discovered a lifeless body and also rescued a critically injured person to the hospital.

"The hoodlums from Opolo attacked the drone operators dispatched to the scene and hijacked the drone control panel which subsequently led to the crash of the drone.

According to the statement, "With the prompt intervention of the policemen, law and order was restored. Although the drone was recovered, the critical components were vandalised by the hoodlums. Meanwhile, two suspects have been arrested in connection with the incident and presently undergoing interrogation. Effort is still ongoing with a view to arresting other fleeing hoodlums."

Our correspondent gathered that the Commissioner of Police, Alonyenu Idu, urged the general public and particularly the residents of Opolo and Okutukutu to remain calm, and report any suspicious act capable of inciting unrest in the state to the following numbers: 0703 457 8208, 0916 732 2691.

The two neighbouring communities were embroiled in a communal clash on Monday.

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The violent clash resulted in pandemonium and bonfires and the blocking of the Diepreye Alamieyeseigha Junction at the Mbiama-Yenagoa Road, forcing motorists and other road users to divert to other routes.

Both sides were said to have recorded an unconfirmed number of casualties after some members of the Okutukutu community reportedly launched an attack on Opolo community.

On Monday, the Bayelsa State Government reportedly took an exception to the attack on Opolo community, "allegedly carried out by some individuals from neighbouring Okutukutu community, which had resulted in some casualties."

The Deputy Governor, Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, in a statement issued by his media aide, Mr Doubara Atasi, on Monday, roundly condemned the attack and directed relevant security agencies to fish out the perpetrators for prosecution.

"The present administration will not condone a situation where individuals or communities resort to violence and physical attacks over territorial or land boundary disputes, more so when such matters are pending in the law court of competent jurisdiction", he warned.

Ewhrudjakpo called on Opolo, and its neighbouring communities particularly Okutukutu to refrain from taking any further action liable to bring about a breakdown of law and order in the area.

He urged the feuding communities to sheathe their swords as the state government was taking every necessary step to resolve the issue, including scheduling an emergency meeting with the leadership of the affected communities in his office by 3pm on Tuesday.

The deputy governor expressed deep regrets over the loss of lives and property from the incident, and assured the bereaved families that government would do everything within its powers to ensure that justice was served.