

# Security deployed as Ekiti, Kwara boundary dispute claims life

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Ekiti State map

By Abiodun Nejo

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The Ekiti State Commissioner for Information, Taiwo Olatunbosun, said on Sunday that soldiers, police and Amotekun corps operatives had moved in to curtail the dispute between Eda Oniyo in Ekiti State and neighbouring Obbo Ayegunle in Kwara State over land ownership.

Olatunbosun said to *PUNCH Metro*, “Available information indicated that the boundary dispute between Eda Oniyo Ekiti and Obbo Ayegunle in Kwara State escalated when armed men from Obbo Ayegunle attacked Eda Oniyo on Saturday.

“One person from the community (Eda Oniyo in Ilejemeje Local Government area) was reportedly killed in the fracas,” the commissioner said in a statement in Ado Ekiti on Sunday.”

Olatunbosun, who appealed to residents of Eda Oniyo to remain calm over the attack on the community, said, “Soldiers, police and members of the Amotekun Corps had moved to the scene immediately to curtail the crisis”, adding that the situation had been brought under control.



He said, “Additional troops had already moved to the area to protect the community while the army formation in Kwara State has been contacted to deploy troops along the Kwara side of the border to curtail further attack from both sides.”

The commissioner, who expressed condolences to the family of the deceased and prayed for the quick recovery of those affected by the incident, reiterated the Ekiti State Government’s commitment to fostering peace and security across the state.

He stressed the need for calm while the security agencies took charge of the situation, assuring the people that the perpetrators and their accomplices would be fished out and brought to justice.

Relating how the Saturday attack took place, the Eleda, Oba Julius Awolola, said, “The Obbo people came armed into our town. They could not attack the Secretariat because some policemen were there.

“They came into the town to attack us. They vandalised the windows of no fewer than two buildings and they killed one of our men in the process. It was when they were resisted by our people that they retreated to Obbo Ayegunle.

“The land in contention belongs to us. We have documents that confirm that it belongs to Eda Oniyo,” Oba Awolola said.

The traditional ruler said that the army, police and state government representatives were in Eda Oniyo on Sunday on the matter, saying, “They said we should be calm and maintain the peace.”

In his reaction, the Police Public Relations Officer, Sunday Abutu, said security agents had already moved into the area to ensure peace, order and security.

Abutu stated, “The command is not unaware of the incident that occurred at Eda Oniyo Ekiti yesterday (Saturday) where suspected armed hoodlums invaded part of the community and fatally injured one person and left two seriously wounded.

“The Commissioner of Police, Adeniran Akinwale, the commander of the Nigeria Army in Ekiti State as well as the Ekiti State Government representatives have visited the scene to assess the situation and proffer a lasting solution as well as ensure that the perpetrators are brought to book.

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“Adequate operatives that include the police and the military have been deployed to that axis to ensure maximum security for the people of Eda Oniyo-Ekiti.

“Members of the public especially the people of Eda Oniyo Ekiti are implored to be calm and avoid taking laws into their hands as the command will ensure the arrest and prosecution of those behind the attack,” the police spokesman said.

*PUNCH Metro* reports that the neighbouring Ekiti and Kwara communities have been laying claim to the ownership of the disputed land in the boundary area hence hostilities between the two towns.

The Eleda of Eda, Oba Awolola, had alleged last month that youths from Obbo Ayegunle attacked and vandalised the Ilejemeje Local Government Secretariat at Eda Oniyo and some residents on their farms.

Oba Awolola had said, “People from Obbo-Ayegunle, a Kwara State community, have been farming on our land, but the government of Ekiti State wants to use the land for youth empowerment and deploy equipment there preparatory to beginning work. That was what provoked them to attack us”.

But the National President, Obbo Aiyegunle Descendants Union, Enoch Ade Ogun, faulted the Eda monarch’s narration, saying the Eda Oniyo people were always the aggressors and “despite provocations from the Eda Oniyo people, the Owa l’obbo and his high chiefs appealed and have continued to appeal to Obbo youths not to retaliate.”

Ogun, who said Obbo Ayegunle people were the owners of the land in contention, had explained that some Eda people, who were scattered about “approached our forefathers and requested to be allowed to settle on Obbo land. They were joyfully welcomed and treated as brothers. This group eventually relocated and settled between Obbo and Iludun Ekiti in 1957 and changed their name to Eda Oniyo.”

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Last Thursday, the Ekiti State Government promised to resolve the land dispute between the Ekiti and Kwara states communities without violence and bloodshed.

The Deputy Governor, Mrs Monisade Afuye, had consequently directed the Technical Committee on Boundary Dispute to visit the area to ascertain the veracity of the claims of the Eda Oniyo people about the ownership of the land under contention.

The deputy governor, according to a statement by his media aide, Victor Ogunje, spoke while interfacing with Eda Oniyo community over the festering boundary dispute between the two towns sequel to a petition written by the community, raising eyebrows over how Obbo Ayegunle had allegedly been encroaching into its land and violently attacking the owners.

The deputy governor had said, “There won’t be bloodshed and the state government shall deploy the instrumentality of the law and peace-building efforts to resolve this matter. Kwara State is our good neighbour and we can’t afford to fight them”, she said.

In its submission, Oba Awolola, who led prominent indigenes to the meeting, complained about how some people from Obo Ayegunle allegedly invaded his town and started arresting people indiscriminately and clamped them in detention over a vast plot of land located between the two towns.

Oba Awolola said the Obbo Ayegunle farmers had been paying royalty to Eda Oniyo on the land for decades, only for them to stop and make alleged spirited efforts to forcibly take over the land from his people.

The statement added that the Obbo Ayegunle Descendants Union had in a letter addressed to Governor Biodun Oyebanji, also accused Eda Oniyo Ekiti of intruding into their lands and causing unnecessary insurrection.