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Communal Clash Claims Five Lives

Posted To The Web: Wednesday, March 11, 2009 - By Emma Una /Calabar



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The raging communal conflict between two border communities of Nkim and Nkum, in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River state, has claimed the lives of five persons, even as Senator Liyel Imoke, governor of the state, has warned that his administration would no more tolerate such conflicts.

The conflict, which broke out recently in the area, eyewitnesses said, was caused by a dispute over farmland. "Nkum people alleged that the Nkim people were encroaching on their farmland and also part of the land which the Nkim people are living on belong to them. This claim is being disputed by the people of Nkim, and this led to the crisis," Okoro Agba, an Igbo resident of the area, told P.M.NEWS.

Even the threat by governor Imoke, that communal conflict is the bane of development in the state and that any community that engages in inter communal war would be left out in the development agenda of his administration, did not deter the Nkim and Nkum people who decided to fight, thus leaving several houses razed, many vehicles damaged and several domestic animals destroyed.

The dispute has been brought under control by mobile policemen dispatched to the area from the Ikom Area Command. Senator Imoke, who gave the warning in another crisis zone, Atabu Community in Obanliku LGA, displaced by a communal attack by the people of Kwando in Benue state, while distributing relief material worth millions of naira to the people to enable them rebuild their lives, said Cross River state was a hot bed for communal conflicts which have, over the years, retarded the economic growth of the state.

Making the presentation on behalf of governor Imoke, the Director-General, State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Mr. Vincent Aquah, said the materials which included corrugated iron sheets, bags of cement, blankets, and

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plastic buckets, should be used to cushion the effect of the crisis which led to the loss of several lives, destruction of houses, crops and livestock.

Meanwhile, the two chiefs of Nkim and Nkum communities have been detained by the police to provide information on what led to the conflict between their communities which have a long-standing relationship. The Cross River State Police spokesman, ASP Thomas Okpene, said the police were investigating what caused the conflict and that culprits would be brought to book.

“The two chiefs are here with us. They have to provide information on what led to the disturbance of peace in the area. These people have been living together for centuries, and from their names, you do not have to be told they are brothers; we are determined to find the cause of the conflict.”

In a remark, the Chief of Utabu community in Shikpeche Clan in Obanliku, Chief Mathias Anyateng, who was represented by a retired religious minister, Rev . Ferdinand Etenekang, expressed gratitude to the state government for its sensitivity to their plight. Chief Anyateng said the materials would go a long way in helping their people to rebuild their houses destroyed during the unwarranted attack on the community by the Ukwando people of Benue state

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