

Herdsmen, vigilante clash claims four lives in Kwara community

FROM LAYI OLANREWaju, ILORIN

A communal clash between a local vigilance group and the Bororo, Fulani has claimed four lives in the Alapa community in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Trouble started on Monday when a Yorubaman who is not identified, was allegedly attacked and killed by yet-to-be-identified Fulani cattle rearers on a farm. The victim reportedly died on the spot.

Sunday Sun correspondent learnt that when the victim's kinsmen heard about his death, they mobilised and attacked some Fulani men, burning down their huts. The Fulani were reported to have deserted their homes in the bush for fear of further reprisal attacks.

A source said the corpses of three Fulani had been evacuated from the bush, while the remains of the Yoruba had also been recovered by the Police. He added that many huts belonging to the Fulani had been razed before the police intervened.

The Kwara State Commissioner of Police, Mr Agboola Oshodi-Glover, in a telephone interview declined to state the number of casualties. He, however, confirmed the clash and

said that the police had restored peace in the area, as people had returned to their businesses. "I am yet to be properly briefed on the casualty rate, so I cannot name a figure yet. Everything is now under control. There was something like clash there," Oshodi-Glover said.

Sunday Sun investigation further revealed that residents have deserted the area for fear of being attacked by Fulani herdsmen or being arrested by the police over the loss of lives during the clash.

This development has been a major concern and worry among people in the area, just as there are reports of reprisals by the parties involved in the crisis. The reason for deserting the community was not unconnected with a number of arrests already made by law enforcement agents over loss of lives in the clash.

According to a source in the area who does not want his name in print, the crisis started when the natives of the community attacked Fulani huts at different spots over the killing of a Yoruba man along the farm path.

Speaking on the development, the Speaker of the state House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Razaq Atunwa, described the development as regrettable more so when lives were lost

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and property destroyed.

The Speaker, who condemned the crisis in its entirety, however, said he did not know who to blame on the "minor and inconsequential matter," saying that, "the police have been on top of the situation. They have made some arrests and taken action to

curtail any recurrence.

"The executive governor has also directed a committee headed by the SSG to handle the matter towards scaling down the tension. I am also grateful to the Emir of Ilorin for taking an active role at reducing the tension and finding lasting solution to the matter.

"I must also mention efforts of the chairman of Asa Local Government Area, who was there from the break of the violence, while I have also been involved in speaking with stakeholders and various heads of different communities to end the crisis.

"Beyond that, I met with the Commissioner of Police in the state. He came here to discuss the matter with me on the way forward. Since the issue started, we thank God there has been very limited reprisals." However, people are now beginning to be scared whenever they see police presence. They believe police have come to arrest them without justification.

Meanwhile, the Kwara State Government has vowed to bring the full weight of the law to bear on those behind the recent clash between Bororos/Fulanis and the indigenes of Alapa in Asa Local Government Area of the state.