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Communal clash: 11 feared dead in Cross River

— 25th April 2016

From Judex Okoro, Calabar

ELEVEN persons were reported dead, while several domestic animals and farm produce were destroyed following a land dispute in some communities in Cross River State.

Of the number, four were reportedly killed in Onyadama and Inyima clash, while seven were killed in Ukpe, Okpagada and Mgbagede land tussle.

Communities involved in serious communal wars over parcel of farmlands in the last couple of weeks include Onyadama and Inyima in Obubra and Yakurr local government areas as well as Ukpe, Okpagada and Mgbagede in Ogoja Local Government in the northern senatorial district.

For 10 years running, the communities have engaged in a fratricidal war over a disputed land. Eders of the warring communities had on different occasions signed a peace pact.

However, trouble started again between the Onyadama and Inyima communities penultimate week when Inyima people allegedly abducted an Onyadama man at his farm, in revenge for the lives they lost in 2014 within the disputed land axis.

An eyewitness told Daily Sun that shortly after the abduction, the Inyima people launched an attack on their Onyadam neighbours and allegedly killed three persons and wounded several others, including children.

The eyewitness said the Inyima people aligned with Nko community and invaded Adun, a small village within Onyadama, and subsequently sacked the whole community, rendering hundreds of persons homeless.

"I can tell you that the entire Ebo community, which is under Onyadama in Obubra, has been sacked as a result of the war," the source said.

The account said most of Ebo people were now refugees in the neighbouring communities of Ofudua, Ababent and Ofat.

At Ogoja Local Government Area, Okpagada and Mbagede communities are currently in communal war with Ukpe community over the ownership of a parcel of land, leading to deaths of about seven persons.

Investigation showed that the clash, which has been raging for about three days now, has led to invasion of both warring communities by the youths.

Speaking, Chairman of Obubra council, Mr Kieran Mfam, said the conflict started "five days ago when an Inyima young man shot his Onyadma counterpart in the bush over land dispute. Luckily the man did not die and what is going on now is revenge action by the Onyadama people."

Mfam said Inyima and Onyama people had a long history of boundary dispute, and that in 2014, the two communities fought over the same piece of land.

Police Public Relation Officer (PPRO), Mr. John Eluu, however said the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Henry Fadairo, had visited the warring communities in Obubra and sued for peace. The PPRO did not confirm any death.

He also said he had not been briefed on Ogoja feud.

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