

Police officer killed, 10 houses destroyed in C' River

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From **Judex Okoro**, Calabar

Tragedy struck in Uyanga community, Akampka Local Government Area of Cross River State as a police officer has been reportedly killed and over 10 houses burnt. The police officer was allegedly killed yesterday morning by youths of Uyanga who were said to be mounting vigilance over allegations of Ojor people planning an attack on them on Christmas day.

Rumours made the rounds that Ojor people were plotting a reprisal attack on Uyanga community and the Uynaga youths quickly mobilized and mounted stop-and-search leading to the killing of the officer who they suspected to be from Ojor.

This is coming barely six months after five persons were reportedly killed in a communal clash between Uyanga and Ojor communities in Akampka. In June this year, both communities went to war over alleged killing of youths from both sides over age-long differences over a piece of land.

A witness, Emmanuel Okar, said: "What led to the present crisis was because Ojor people were said to have boasted to launch attack on Uyanga and on getting wind of it, Uyanga community decided to cordon off all tracks and major roads leading to Ojor to avoid sudden attacks, especially on Christmas Day.

"On Christmas day, while some Uyanga youths were patrolling in the name of road work round the community, they sighted a car driving towards Ojor at about 6:00am and the driver also fearing that he might be attacked having gotten information of possible break down of law and order decided to turn into Ojor. So the youths on patrol went after him and clobbered him to death.

"Uyanga is under fire now; they have destroyed houses at Uyanga by Ojor. Ojor community insisted on retaliating the last fight that happened in June this year during which they lost some people. While searching his vehicle, they discovered that he had a pistol on him and then burnt his car. And when Uyanga people got wind of the killing of the man, they mobilized for reprisal leading to destruction of houses and other valuable property at Uyanag."

As at the time of filling the report, some residents of Uyuanga had fled the town and taking refuge at neighbouring communities.

Reacting to the ugly incident, the member representing Akampka II state constituency, Mathew Olori, said: "I have been on top of the matter for months now, doing some security network yet no head way. And if you ask them what is the cause of the problem, they cannot substantiate anything that led to it. It is mystery this time.

"I went to both communities, did Christmas with them, had meetings with representatives of both communities and advised against violence. The next day, I heard that they have killed somebody in Uyanga. The man killed is a policemen and a non-indigene from Adim, who was married to Ojor woman and was going to see his family.

"For me, I refused to be associated with anything that will take life and property because there is no gain. How can young men go about killing one another for no just cause? It's barbaric."

Also reacting, the Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Ms Iren Ugbo, said: "Yes, we are aware of the incident and the person that was killed was one of our personnel. We have deployed security operatives to calm the situation. So, we are on top of it."