

7 killed, houses razed as Christian, Muslim youths clash in Kaduna

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Sola Ojo, Kaduna

No fewer than seven persons were feared killed while several others were injured as a result of violent clashes that erupted between Christian and Muslim youths at Kasuwan Magani, Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State, yesterday. Several houses were also reportedly razed in the community located along the Kaduna-Kafanchan expressway, about 31 kilometres from Kaduna, the state capital, before the situation was brought under control by security operatives.

Police spokesman in the state, ASP Aliyu Mukhtar, who confirmed that there was tension in the area, however, declined to give any specific number of casualties.

He said the situation had been brought under control and police were taking inventory of the damage that might have occurred during the clashes, adding that the assistant commissioner of police (operations) had since moved to the area.

Though there were conflicting reports on the immediate cause of the mayhem, the summary of all the reports was that the issue of dating between Hausa Muslims and Christian girls, which had been lingering over time, got out of hand yesterday.

One version of the story claimed that a Christian girl was abducted and converted to Islam and taken to the residence of a Muslim leader, from where the crisis got heated up. But another version claimed that Christian youths were moving around to beat up their girls suspected to be going out with Hausa Muslims in the area.

A source, which did not want to be named, disclosed that, recently, a Christian girl was beaten up by Christian boys and her mother reported the matter to the police, but the police were chased away by youths when they attempted to make arrests.

The development forced many residents, especially women and children, out of their homes due to fear of the unknown, while motorists plying the road were also stranded for hours.

Kaduna State governor, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, has directed the prosecution of all persons responsible for the mayhem. He charged security agencies to investigate the incident, arrest and prosecute the perpetrators.

A statement by the senior special assistant on media and publicity to the governor, Samuel Aruwan, said el-Rufai condemned the violence and regreted the wanton destruction of lives.

“The government has directed the State Emergency Management Agency to take inventory of damage and provide relief materials, with immediate effect. Security forces have been deployed to contain the situation, protect life and property and to prevent any further breakdown of law and order,” he said.

El-Rufai equally urged all citizens and communities to reject violence and division, and uphold their neighbours in peace and harmony, in the interest of economic and social development of the area and the state at large.