

Police arrest monarch, confirm 2 dead in Benue land dispute

From **Rose Ejembi,**
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THE Benue State Police Command has arrested a traditional ruler in Ugboji community, in Edikwu district of Apa Local Government Area of the state, Chief Adamu, over a land dispute resulting in the death of some people. Although locals claim that six persons were killed in the crisis, which occurred in the early hours of last Sunday, the police confirmed that only two persons lost their lives in the incidence.

Speaking to newsmen on the matter yesterday, the state Commissioner of Police, Ene Okon, alleged that the arrested traditional ruler was the one who engineered the land dispute between Okwiji and Ugboji communities, which resulted in the death of the two persons and wanton destruction of properties.

Okon, who noted that the crisis started over 20 years ago, explained that the state government had severally intervened and peace was restored only for the issue to recur few months ago. He said when the police stepped into the matter and investigation was on going, the chairman of the council pleaded with the police to allow him resolve the matter but could not return back to the police.

"So, last Saturday night, the youths of Ugbobi gathered themselves with their militias and attacked the other village called Okwuji, killing two people. When information got to the police, the DPO swung into action and I directed that security be beefed up in that area. As I talk to you, normalcy has returned to the area.

"We have made some arrests, including the principal aspect, the village head of the area, Adagbo, who masterminded the crisis and he is helping us with useful information. We have also arrested other suspects who are giving useful information on the matter."

It was gathered that the victims were killed in Okwiji by suspected militia allegedly hired by Ugbobi community over a disputed parcel of land, which was discovered in the 1960s to be rich in oil deposit. Elder Abutu Edikwu, in a telephone chat with newsmen, said the crisis between the two communities, which dated back several years, was renewed last weekend when armed militia from Ugboji community came to attack the Okwiji community.