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Cult war claims 10 in Cross River

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Calabar, the capital of Cross River State, seems to be gradually turning into a theatre of war as rival cult groups flex muscle, leading to the killing of about 10 persons in the last three weeks.

The victims are said to be members of various cult groups that have engaged in a battle for supremacy within the metropolis, even as the state police command has been on their trail.

Since the general election, the groups have been at daggers drawn over issues relating to killing of members and reprisals.

Investigations revealed that while eight lives have been lost in the last three weeks, two were said to have been killed this week.

The latest cult clash was said to be between the Axe and Clans members. Trouble was said to have started following a misunderstanding between the two rival groups. It was learnt that the Clans have not been happy with the Axe following the alleged killing of one of their boys at Ekpo Abais Street last year.

The victim was said to have been trailed by Axe guys to his aluminum workshop where they hacked him to death.

Moves to reconcile the groups have been difficult, culminating into another clash last week when the Clans launched a reprisal and killed a senior member of Axe, popularly known as Las Born. In retaliation, Axe men killed a member of Clans

A witness, Ekpo Johnson, said: “At about 8pm on Saturday, we were relaxing in one of the joints at Mayne Avenue by Ekpo Abasi and suddenly there was sporadic shooting and people started running in different directions, shouting for help. So, those of us there also took to our heels.

“Within 20 minutes, they had finished operation. When I went back to the air condition car workshop, I discovered it was a cult clash between Clans and Axe as the later had launched an attack on Axe, killing Last Born, one of the king pins.”

When contacted, the security adviser to Governor Ben Ayade, Mr Ani Esin, said: “At the resumption of the clash, the security agencies mobilised and moved into action and restored peace in the area.”

Police public relations officer in the state, Irene Ugbo, confirmed the clash. She added that four suspects were in police net even as three locally made pistols were recovered.