

Communal clash: 14 killed, 18 injured, several houses burnt in Cross River

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SHARES



Judex Okoro, Calabar

The clash between Usumutong and Ebom communities in Cross River State continued to gather momentum as about 14 persons from Ebom were feared killed following an early morning invasion of the community by the Usimutongs yesterday.

Also, 18 persons have been hospitalised and several houses razed by the invaders.

The two communities have been engaged in an age-long land dispute, leading to loss of lives.

The clash got to a climax in 2005 when the Eboms invaded the Ebijakara and loved the place. Today, Ebijakara is a wasteland, and they are said to be accommodated by the Usumutong people.

The recent hostilities broke out at the wee hours of yesterday when heavily armed mercenaries from Usumutong invaded Ebom and slaughtered about eight persons even as property worth millions of naira was destroyed.

The recent invasion has been described as a reprisal discreetly carried out by the Ebijakara indigenes that are accommodated by the Usumutong community, under the guise of being from Usumutong.

Checks by Daily Sun revealed that over 24 people were feared dead while 18 others were hospitalised at various hospitals in Ugep and its environs.

An indigene of Ebom, who simply gave his name as Ogbonna, said: “At about 5am (yesterday), we were woken up by gunshots and wailings from innocent people – women and children asking for help. By the time we realised that our community had been invaded by Enijakara/Usumutong warmongers, it was late.

“It was too late to regroup and launch an attack. So most of us ran into the bush and nearby villages for protection. I can tell you that several houses have been razed and innocent lives lost.

“Most of us left our houses without a pin as we never expected this considering the fact that there was a committee meeting to find lasting solution to

the imbroglio. It is quite a pity that while we were at the verge of achieving peace this ugly incident happened again,” he stated.

Another victim, John Egbe, said: “The attack was launched by Ebijajara people. They came with heavy and sophisticated weapons and they came from both sides and inflicted damages on our people.

“The people of Ebijakara were sacked by their Ebom neighbours in 2005 and so we suspect that they came for revenge. And that is what happened today.”

He called on government to find a way of resetting this people, adding that it would be difficult to put a stop to the recurring conflicts in the area.

Confirming the incident, the state Commissioner of Police, Nse Akpan, said he was out of the state and did not have the figure of those killed so far and number of houses razed.

He, however, called for dialogue to resolve the perennial conflicts among warring communities in the state, adding that the police would do everything possible to restore peace in the area during this Yuletide.



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