

# The Lifeline

## Why bishop, son were murdered, houses burnt in Cross River

From **Judex Okoro**, Calabar

**MORE** details have emerged, showing why a bishop and his son were killed and houses burnt in a communal clash between Urugbam and Abanwan, of Erei clan, in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Investigations indicated that the late Bishop Ukam, his son and others whose houses were burnt were victims of alleged reprisal carried out by the Urugbam.

The Urugbam and Abanwan communities have been at each other's throat over an oil palm plantation settlement established by the defunct Eastern Region government before the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. The estate was handed over to the Cross River State

government shortly after the war in 1970.

Hostilities in the area escalated on December 4, 2018, when Abanwan community was said to have unleashed mayhem on the Urugbam people, killing more than 15 persons and razing almost the entire village. It was also gathered that, in 2019, an Abanwan militia attacked again and brought down the remaining houses, with scores of residents either killed or declared missing.

The development turned both communities into a near wasteland, with little or no economic activities, as male youths, young women and prominent indigenes have all deserted their ancestral homes for safety in nearby communities. At least 800 houses have

been razed as a result of the communal clashes.

And in continuation of the war to reclaim their ancestral land, the Urugbam people allegedly regrouped and launched a reprisal on the Abanwan community and burnt the bishop alive, beheaded his son and also killed several other persons, claiming that they have suffered too much in the hands of their Abanwan brothers.

An indigene of Urugbam, who didn't want his name in print, said the attack on Abanwan on January 27, 2022, was revenge for the brutal killing and maiming of their people by the Abanwan, as well as the incessant destruction of their property.

According to him, "Urugbam people

have suffered untold hardship in the hands of the Abanwan people since December 4, 2018, when they attacked them and burnt their houses and followed it up in 2019 and razed down all the houses that were left in Urugbam when they came in 2018."

Narrating how the latest attack was carried out, he said: "The bishop and the son, who were from Abanwan, were going to the market that early morning, not knowing that the Urugbam people had laid ambush. After that, the youths moved into their community and also burnt houses. It was really a revenge mission on what we have suffered.

"Since 2018, we have been appealing for peace so that this dispute can be settled once and for all, so that all the communities would return to their