

Trouble in Benue community

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•Cop, youth killed, houses burnt

From Scholastica Hir, Makurdi

Two persons, including a police officer, have been murdered in mysterious circumstances in Mbakpur Community, Ipiav, Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Our correspondent gathered that trouble started when some youths allegedly went to a man's house, accused him of being a wizard and attempted to beat him up and also banish him from the land. The incident occurred by 2am on January 27, 2025.



Burnt houses and huts

A relation to one of the victims, who was identified as Terhemmen Ber, had raised the alarm over the killing, alleging that the police killed him.

A source who didn't want to be named for fear of victimization said some police officers went to his house at 2am on January 27, 2025, and killed him.



CP Yabanet

According to the source, the late Terhemen, a father of five, who was chairman of a community meeting, had a misunderstanding with one of his committee members during their meeting on Sunday. Later, the man's wife reported to the police that he (Terhemen) was a thief.

Our source narrated that, "When they (police) came to the house, they started beating him and he was shouting. His wife was also shouting for help. That was when they shot him."

Their screams, according to a local, attracted neighbours who raced to the place to check what was happening. But their efforts to rescue their neighbour resulted in a free for all. The youths overpowered the police, took their gun and shot a police officer in the process. That was the beginning of the problem.

He said: "The officers went back to stored yams, dried cassava, rice and motor bikes, which were kept in the compound. They also arrested the wife of the deceased."

The police were also alleged to have returned the following Tuesday and arrested some youths of the community.

The source told Daily Sun that elders of the community and the local government chairman have met to find a lasting solution to the case, especially in finding and returning the lost gun. It was

said that the police had given them a condition that unless the gun was returned, they were not going to release the body of the deceased or his wife.

Our source lamented that even though the gun has been found and returned, only the body has been released, while the wife is still in custody.

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“Now we are worried. Our people are scared and some have fled the area. We don’t know what will happen next, whether they will come back to attack us. This is what is happening in my community and I think it’s because the community has no one to fight for us “

When contacted, the police public relations officer in the state, CSP Catherine Anene, confirmed the incident. She, however, explained that the police officers had gone there in response to a distress call, when the youths from the community attacked them.

She said: “They went for a distress call. They were called that someone was to be attacked. The policemen went there in the early hours of the morning and when they were coming out, they were attacked.”

A resident in Mbakpur community, Ipiav, Gboko LGA, who preferred to remain anonymous, confirmed the incident.

He said: “It all started on January 26, 2025, when a group of youths in our community, including the deceased, Terhemen, visited the accused who they tagged a wizard. In an attempt to beat him and banish him from the community, his wife joined forces with him to protect her husband from being beaten. In the process, one Terhemen, dragged and fought the two of them, biting the woman.

“The bite left the woman with a cut on the hand and so the woman proceeded to the police station and reported the matter there. From what we gathered, the matter was reported as if Terhemen was

a criminal.

“So police came to arrest Terhemen in the night, around 2am. He was actually arrested and he was trying to run away from the police. They had some kind of dragging and he was shot. While his wife was shouting for help, his group rushed to the place.

“We were not there but we gathered that when they got there, they accosted the police men. We don’t know whether he was shot or beaten but, in the process, a policeman also died.

“In the morning, some of the sympathizers who came around were arrested while the wife of the deceased was also arrested and taken into custody. Meanwhile, the real culprits are all at large.

“Right now, the community is in confusion as they are trying to figure out how that happened.”

The resident, however, stated that himself and some community members were mediating to find a lasting solution to the problem.

He told our reporter that out of the 11 sympathizers who were arrested, seven have been released so far, while they were trying to secure the release of the others.

He confirmed that the incident also led to the burning of many houses in the community, which caused fear and apprehension among residents, making some to flee their homes for fear of the unknown.

He said that peace is returning to the community. “I’m not from the community but as a Reverend who is residing in their community, I am only advocating for peace and peace is returning. Several of our locals who ran away are coming back and I have been assuring them because I am working closely with some people to ensure that the problem does not escalated.

“As we speak the boys are calm and people have returned and peace is gradually returning to the community. Community leaders also have met and condemned the act of calling people witches and wizards. They also condemned killing of the police officer and promised to fish out the real culprits,” he said.