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## 50 killed as Yoruba, Hausa clash in Osun

March 9, 2017 | Adeolu Adeyemo

...houses destroyed, vehicles burnt

- Policemen, soldiers deployed
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- Ooni sues for peace

Peace being enjoyed in Ile-Ife, Osun State, since the end of the intractable war between Ife and Modakeke people, was shattered yesterday when violence erupted in the ancient town. At least, 50 people were feared killed when Yoruba took up arms against the Hausa community in the Sabo area of the town.

The Magaji of Hausa community in Ile-Ife and secretary to the central mosque in the town, Alhaji Nasir Magaji, said that over 50 people died in the fracas.

A community leader in Ile-Ife, who identified himself as Chief Adewale Adejoba, confirmed that over 50 people died in the crisis. Magaji told journalists that many Hausa men fled the town for secured places to avoid being killed.

"Those killed among us are more than 50 and the corpses of those killed were in front of Ife Central Mosque," he said. The bodies had been deposited at the state hospital in Ile-Ife. It was learnt that trouble started when a Hausa man living at Sabo area of the town was accused of sleeping with the wife of an Ife man. The husband was reportedly devastated when he discovered that the man had slept with his wife.

However, Magaji stated that a Hausa man allegedly slapped a wife of a Yoruba man, Kuburat, who was a pure water vendor. He said: "It was Kuburat that provoked the Hausa man who slapped him and that after slapping her, many Hausa people were not in his support as they scolded him for doing that, but the Yoruba who were not pleased with the situation, retaliated by beating the Hausa man and others.

Hence, the Hausa fought back." The incident was said to have generated controversy between the Yoruba and the Hausa living in the community on Tuesday when the act was perpetrated.

However, it snowballed into bloody violence in the early hours of yesterday. It became a free for all where dangerous weapons such as guns, arrows, swords, machetes, daggers and clubs were used. Witnesses told New Telegraph that the people organised themselves into two formidable groups to match each other strength for strength in the fierce battle which led to the killing and maiming of innocent people as well as destruction of property believed to worth several millions of naira.

Two of the over 50 people reportedly killed were burnt alive while bonfires were also made by both sides. Unconfirmed reports claimed that two persons were beheaded. Several people sustained serious wounds while trying to flee the theatre of war. Some of the victims were infants and youths. About 85 houses were said to have either been vandalised or torched while some vehicles were burnt.

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At the battle ground around Sabo area, the Hausa employed arrows and bows, daggers, among others, in the battle while their opponents armed themselves with Dane guns, machetes and charms.

When our correspondent visited the battle ground about 12:30p.m., the Ife warriors were patrolling the street and threatening not to retreat. They accused police of taking sides with the Hausa.

This, according to them, was done because the policemen dispatched to maintain law and order were led by a Hausa man. In the midst of the confrontation, miscreants sneaked in to loot shops and perpetrate other criminal acts. Shop owners hurriedly locked up while commercial and private vehicles deserted the area. Residents also fled to other parts of the town.

A combined team of anti-riot regular and mobile policemen was on ground to maintain peace. Fully armed policemen were placed at strategic positions while others were patrolling the area. Later, about five trucks carrying soldiers were deployed in the area to maintain law and order.

The soldiers left their Engineering Construction Regiment Barracks at Ede area of the state about 4p.m. when it was discovered that the crisis was going beyond the control of the police.

The soldiers were chanting war songs while heading to the town. Sources at the barracks told our correspondent that the Brigade Commander of Ede Barracks had to deploy his men in Ile-Ife following an order from above that he should act promptly to restore normalcy in the town. In the mayhem, no fewer than 300 Hausa were taken captive by the Yoruba.

But while calling for calm, the Ooni, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi, ordered that they be released immediately. He also warned that nothing untoward should happen to them.

Oba Ogunwusi appealed to the warring factions to give peace a chance because, according to him, there is no gain in crisis. Speaking through his media aide, Comrade Moses Olafare, the monarch said he had instructed some palace men to see to the rescue of the Hausa who were captured by the Ife.

He said peace would soon be restored between the two warring factions. Ooni called on Ife indigenes and nonindigenes to continue to live in peace in Ife Kingdom. According to the monarch, the Ife Traditional Council kicked against war or violence of any forms. He said: "As Hausa are sojourners on this land of Ile-Ife likewise Ife indigenes live in other towns and cities across the country and in diaspora.

"Let's give peace a chance and maintain peace and harmony in the land." Also, the Elejesi of Ejesi Kingdom, Ife, Oba Babatunde Awosunle, called on the people to allow peace to reign in the land. The Sarun of the Source, Chief Yemi Oriowo, alleged that a Hausa man slapped the wife of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) Vice-President (name withheld), which led to free for all.

At Lagere area of Ile-Ife, some Yoruba youths, who were armed with machetes, knives and clubs allegedly attacked some shops, said to be owned by the Hausa. In retaliation, at Sabo in Ile-Ife, some Hausa youths also armed with machetes, knives and other dangerous weapons allegedly attacked shops belonging to Yoruba people.

It was gathered that some school children took refuge at the palace of the Ooni amidst radio broadcast that their parents should visit the palace for their wards. Also, Governor Rauf Aregbesola said he had caused deployment of heavy security forces to the scene of the crisis.

In a statement, the Director, Bureau of Communication and Strategy, Office of the Governor, Mr. Semiu Okanlawon, assured the residents of the readiness of the security forces to quell the clash. Also speaking on the development, the Senior Special Assistant to the governor on Arewa Matter, Imam Muhammed Basir, said the situation had taken a very dangerous dimension.

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He said: "I have notified the state governor and the state Police Commissioner, Mr. Fimihan Adeoye, and the state Director of the Department of State Services (DSS) on the development." In his own comment, the acting Police Commissioner, Mr. Mohammed Abubakar Koji, said the policemen were in control of the situation. He spoke through the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mrs. Folasade Odo.

The government later declared a twoday curfew in entire Ile-Ife. According to a statement, the curfew, which will be between 6p.m. and 7a.m., will be in force till Friday. The curfew took effect from yesterday.

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