

Policemen, naval rating attacked in Kwara communal clash



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By **Biodun Oyeleye Ilorin**



At least one person was feared dead while two policemen and a naval rating were injured during a communal clash between Offa in Offa Local Government Area and Ijagbo in Oyun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

The incident also left property worth millions of naira destroyed. The injured security personnel were said to have been part of a team deployed to the troubled area

and were allegedly shot at by one of the warring parties.

About eight vehicles were said to have been destroyed in the violence, which led to the closure of the major highway, Ajase-Ijagbo-Offa federal highway for several hours as the parties exchanged fire power.

The newly renovated Offa Central Hotel was vandalised while vehicles and motorcycles within its precinct also suffered similar fate. Some residents of Ijagbo, who spoke with our reporter said they had to evacuate their families from the community. A statement by the state police command said the violence broke out when the chairman of Oyun Local Government Area was presiding over a peace committee called to resolve a land dispute between the two communities.

It was gathered the conflict was over a parcel of land whose ownership had been in dispute between one of the popular families in Offa and another family in Ijagbo. Sources claimed that the Offa family had, three days ago, went to claim ownership of the land, but were repelled by their Ijagbo counterparts leading to violence.

Motorists plying the Ijagbo-Offa road were turned back at Elejoka Bridge while sporadic and heavy shootings between the two warring sides rent the air. This left many travellers stranded on the major highway. Shops and homes were hurriedly locked as residents fled in panic. Schools and businesses in the two communities did not open at all.

A statement by police spokesman, Ajayi Okasanmi said: "At about 0800hrs, report reaching the Area Commander, Offa, indicated that a land dispute between Ijagbo and Offa communities was getting out of hand, hence a peace meeting was organised by chairman of the council area, having the area commander and other stakeholders in attendance.

Meanwhile, Governor Abdulfatah Ahmed, had warned that his administration will deal decisively with perpetrators of the clash. The governor, in a statement signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Abdulwahab Oba, expressed concern over the unwarranted and absolutely avoidable acts in the two communities.