

Father, son beheaded in C'River communal dash

Clement James
CALABAR

Two people from Ebom community in Cross River State, Oti Ato and his son, Sunday, were at the weekend headed by people suspected to have come from Usumutong, a neighbouring community also in Cross River State.

However, Ato's grandson, Michael, narrowly escaped death but sustained gunshot wounds.

The two communities have been at each other's throat for many years, with casualties usually recorded on both sides, and every attempt by successive administrations to intervene had proven abortive.

But the village head of Ebom, Chief Sunday Obito, who spoke with journalists yesterday, claimed that three persons were still missing,

while confirming that the headless bodies of the two people killed had been recovered with the help of soldiers stationed there.

He said: "The man and his family were harvesting cassava when they were attacked by Usumutong people. According to the grandson, who is presently receiving treatment in a hospital in Itighidi due to bullet wounds he got while hiding in the bush, said he saw them cut the heads of his grandfather and his father from his hiding place.

They even made his wife, Eliza Oti, watch while they beheaded her husband and her son and asked her to take the message to the people.

"We had thought that since soldiers are present, peace had returned but we have been proved wrong once again. Even as they steal our farm produce, we kept mute but now they have started again by killing a father and

his son in the presence of his wife," Obito lamented.

Oban Bassey, one of Ebom's community leaders, corroborated Obito's statement.

He said: "As we speak, we have been able to get the headless corpses of Oti and his son with the help of soldiers at Usumutong. We have equally reported to the DPO and he has seen the corpses."

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Irene Ugbo, confirmed the killing of two people in the clash but said the commissioner had intervened in the crisis.

She said: "Yes, we are aware of the crisis and the two people who were killed. We are on top of the situation and the commissioner of police has invited leaders of the two communities to meet with him for deliberation. Our men have been deployed to the area and there is calm now."