

Benue: 3 killed, houses burnt in bloody clash between 2 communities

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At least three people have been reported killed and several houses razed following a bloody clash between youths of Ojantele, Otobi of Otukpo and Ijegwu of Obi Local Government Areas of Benue State. Although the fatality could be higher, the state government put the casualty figure at three and that scores of residents of the warring sides have been displaced from their homes, with many people sustaining varying degrees of injury.

Governor Samuel Ortom's Security Adviser, Col. Paul Hembra (rtd), told journalists in Makurdi yesterday that the affected communities took up arms against each other when some youths of Ijegwu in Obi LGA had engaged in a free-for-all fight with

Anambra Transporters revenue officials

(their counterparts in Otukpo over disconnection of power supply to the local government area.)

"It was a very simple incident that shouldn't have resulted to carnage that we all witnessed. The Iggede people of Obi and Oju local governments and their Idoma neighbours, who lived as brothers and sisters over the years and carried out inter-marriages between them, engaged in a simple misunderstanding over electricity supply from a transformer that serves the two areas resulting into this unfortunate violence.

"From my own records, we recorded three deaths. There are unconfirmed reports projecting the figure to be higher than that but I am talking of what I confirmed. If I confirm the figure is higher than that, I will still let you know. About six houses were also burnt during the incident," he said.

Hembra further said that

Ortom had since the wake of the crisis engaged men of the 401 Military Brigade, which deployed their men, to nip the situation in the bud.

He said stakeholders from both sides including traditional rulers, local government chairmen and religious leaders during

a meeting with him, regretted the actions of the youths and vowed to stop a reoccurrence.

Hembra also confirmed the massive influx of armed Fulani herdsmen in Guma, Agatu, Apa, Kwande and Makurdi local government areas among others apparently to attack, kill farmers

and destroy their crops.

The Security Adviser said that the incursion has persisted in recent weeks, adding that the attacks in Kwande has reduced drastically due to the intervention of the military, whom he said are currently mobilising to launch patrols in Guma Local Government Area to curb attacks.

He said, "the herdsmen have been coming for attacks and each time they are repelled, they come back again. With the elections now over and the pressure on the security agencies reduced, we are thinking of permanent deployment along that axis to put a permanent stop to these attacks."

