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ThisDay question

## Soldiers Drafted to Okene as Fresh Crisis Claims 8

07.03.2009

As the fresh crisis which engulfed Okene in Kogi State escalates, armed soldiers from the Chari Maigumeri Barracks in Lokoja were yesterday drafted to the area to restore peace following the inability of mobile policemen to bring the crisis under control.

For several years running, Okene town had been plagued by recurring violent clashes arising from political and clan misunderstanding leading to several losses of lives and properties worth billions of naira. THISDAY gathered that the on-going crisis, which had claimed no fewer than eight lives and properties worth millions of naira, is between the Okengwen and Obehirra communities and it is said to have arisen from the use of masquerades to torment innocent citizens as well as destroy properties belonging to perceived political opponents.

As part of his efforts to bring peace to the area, chairman of Okene Local Government council earlier placed an indefinite ban on activities of masquerades throughout the area, an action that brought relative peace to the area which has become notorious for violent clashes.

The ban was however defied by a section in the local government which organised the parade of the masquerades and used them to terrorise innocent victims, including a pregnant woman who was beaten to a point of miscarriage.

However, when her relatives raised eyebrow over her predicament, her family house was razed by those behind the dastardly act after dealing several blows on her elder brother who frowned at the treatment meted to her sister.

The brother was said to have organised a reprisal attack against them which led to the instant death of one of the two principal actors while his accomplice sustained serious injuries and was rushed to a nearby hospital.

Though the crisis started as a minor incident, it has boomeranged into a clan war as at yesterday while guns and other dangerous weapons were freely used by the warring clans to subdue and overpower each other just as a detachment of mobile policemen drafted to area to restore peace lost control leading to the drafting of soldiers from Lokoja, the state capital.

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