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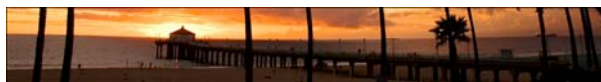
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THISDAY

**Nigeria: Ebonyi Communal Clash Claims More Lives**

Chinedu Eze

21 March 2010

Lagos — The communal clash between the people of Ezillo clan who are the aborigines and the Ezza settlers over struggle for land has claimed four prominent people from Cross River State. The quartet were burnt to death during the week on an emissary to the troubled community.

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Report said mercenaries allegedly employed by the Ezzas killed and burnt to death the victims who were on their way to Ogoja through the Enugu-Abakaliki highway that cuts through the warring community and that their four-wheel-drive vehicle with the number, LN 304 AAA, belonging to a director in the Federal Civil Service who was also killed in the incident, was also burnt down.

THISDAY learnt that Cross River State Government sent a delegation to Ebonyi State Government on Tuesday, protesting the killings and the state government is striving to end the crisis by any possible means.

Besides the aforementioned, other killings have been taking place along the highway and in the various villages of the community.

According to eye witness account, the crisis is still on-going in spite of all the efforts to end it because the Ezzas who have dominant population in the state refused to resettle in portion of land given to them by the state government, while the Ezillo people defiantly insisted that the Ezzas, known as Ezza Ezillos must leave the community.

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The clash which started on May 10, 2008 has claimed more than 600 lives with property worth more than N1 billion destroyed.

A senior official of the Ebonyi state government told THISDAY that efforts made by the state government to reconcile the two warring clans ended in futility as political interests seem to have suffused the major reason why the crisis started, which is the resistant of the Ezillos against alleged plan of the Ezza settlers to take over the community by their superior population and overwhelming wealth.

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But the Ezzas have dismissed the fears, alleging that the Ezillos had always wanted to force them out of the community, which became their home way back in the 1930s, when their great grand fathers were invited to help Ezillos fight their neighbours in the enduring struggle for land.

A prominent son of Ezillo and a public servant in the state told THISDAY at the weekend that Ezillo people are eager to make peace, complaining that Ezza people have engaged in guerilla warfare to exterminate the Ezillos, adding that to make peace both parties should make sacrifices.

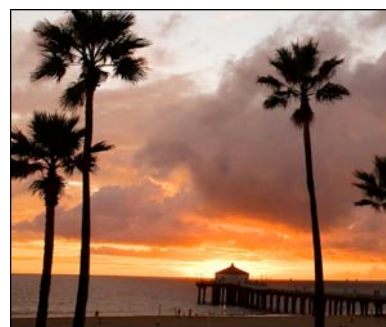
THISDAY also gathered that the Ezzas who rejected the place given to them in the community by the state government, arguing that it was a stream of land that lies in the boundary between two communities, requested that one half of the community should be allocated to them, while the Ezillos reject such request, insisting that they could only concede what government has already given to the Ezza Ezillos.

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"Government moved from the initial 52.5 hectares of land given to them and enlarged it to 306. 29 hectares; this is additional landmass of 253.5 hectares as contained in the broadcast of the governor, Chief Martin Elechi," a source told THISDAY.

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But Ignatius Nwali from the Ezza clan told THISDAY that his people decided to continue to launch attacks because in the past whenever a truce was agreed on the Ezillo people would break it and they would be caught unawares, noting that until their own conditions are met they would not stop the fight.

"The area that Ezza people want is on this side of Ebonyi River . Due to the good relationship and good co-existence our grandfathers had with their grandfathers they agreed to live together. But since they want to flush us out or eliminate or prevent us from enjoying the fruit of the labour of our grandfathers, we have requested that we live at one side of the community. The land where we live before, we are ready to forfeit- those land at the other side of Ebonyi River is what we want. That is what we want now."

Dr Onyekachi Eni, Chief Press Secretary to the Ebonyi State Governor told THISDAY, "Since this crisis broke out, Governor Martin Elechi has left no stone unturned to resolve it. He has been personally involved in the various peace building initiatives of the state government.

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