

Ten Feared Dead in Kogi Communal Clash

January 11, 2019 3:21 am



Yekini Jimoh in Lokoja

No fewer than 10 people were feared dead in a renewed communal clash between Ebirra Mozun and Bassa-Komu ethnic groups in Bassa Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State.

This latest incident followed the recent return of the Ebirra people who were displaced from their various communities due to the crisis which started last year April.

It was gathered that following the intervention of elders from the area, the Ebirra-speaking people who left their homes in many communities as a result of the crisis, were asked to go back home by the state government in order to pave way for a lasting peace among the two ethnic groups.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Ebirra refugees who were accompanied by the security operatives and political appointees, including the Administrator of Bassa LGA, Sam Alumka, and others returned to Oguma, the headquarters of the local government on Wednesday, and were expected proceed to their various villages and communities.

It was however, alleged that an uncomplimentary remark by the paramount ruler of Bassa-Komu ethnic group, the Aguma of Bassa, William Keke, ignited the latest crisis.

He was alleged to have said that the returning Ebirra people should go back to Lokoja or where they were coming from.

A source familiar with the crisis also stated that the Ohiogba of Mozum, Alhaji Halidu Bukar Ali and other Ebirra leaders who were at Aguma of Bassa's palace to receive their people back

home were nearly ambushed by suspected militia of a warring group, but for the intervention of the security operatives who brought the situation under control.

According to the source, after the escape from an ambush by the Ohiogba of Mozum and the Ebira leaders, the alleged "unguarded statement" by the monarch spread quickly to the various communities of the council, resulting to anger and renewed violence.

In the process, over 10 people were said to have lost their lives in some of the affected communities.

It was reported that two residents of Mozum, Kagiwa Hussain and Aminu Usman who were returning from Oguma to Mozum were also killed by hoodlums in military uniform who were believed to have been sponsored by one of the warring factions.

As at the time of writing this report, peace had returned in Ibiroko, Oguma, Sheria, Auta and Ojugbe towns, which were deserted for months, while crisis was still raging at Ikede with heavy casualties on both sides.

Meanwhile, the Kogi State Police Public Relation Officer (PPRO), Mr. William Aya, while confirming the incident to journalists yesterday, said only two people died, adding that the situation was under control.

He said two people lost their lives in the renewed violence between the two warring ethnic tribes who have been at daggers drawn in the eastern part of the state for months.

Aya however, added that the state police command has drafted a team of Mobile Policemen, conventional policemen and the Nigerian Army personnel, with an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) in charge of the operation to restore normalcy as quickly as possible.

"Two people were killed. One was killed yesterday, and the second today. Calm has returned in the affected areas. ACP (Assistant Commissioner of Police) is in charge of operation, while mobile policemen, conventional policemen, area commanders and army are already there to restore law and order as soon as possible", he said
