

# 15 Killed in Fresh Tiv, Jukun Conflict

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Wole Ayodele in Taraba

At least, 15 persons were killed yesterday in a renewed crisis between Jukun and Tiv tribes in Wukari, Taraba State with many houses razed down in the affected communities.

The Special Adviser to Taraba State Governor on Students Affairs, Mr. Samson Tor-musa confirmed the incident, claiming that no fewer than seven village were set ablaze with scores of residents displaced.

The special adviser listed the affected communities to Tar-Orshi, Ikyaan Gbaki, Orlumun Nege, Tor-Musa, Ioryina and Kashuan Shanu villages as well as Chonku village.

He appealed to the warring ethnic groups to sheathe their swords, asking elites and stakeholders from the area "to come together to work for peace and peaceful coexistence."

Also, the Taraba State Police Command confirmed the attacks. However, the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. David Misal told journalists that there was no casualties in the attacks.

But residents, who fled the conflict zone yesterday, said the conflict affected some villages belonging to both tribes along Wukari Kwatan Sule, Chonku and border communities of Jootar and Vaase.

They lamented that the renewed conflict would in no small measure undermine a peace accord brokered last week between the two warring ethnic groups

A Jukun community leader, Mr. Bako Benjamin said despite the peace accord reached last week between the two warring communities, Tiv ethnic militias had attacked on Jukun communities.

According to him, just this morning in the wee hours, they struck at Chonku firing sporadically and razed down houses. They attacked four of our communities in the last three days and as I am talking to you, corpses of 15 people killed by Tiv militias have been deposited in Wukari and we have compiled their names.

However, Orbee Uchiv, a Tiv spokesman, denied the claim of the Jukun leader, noting that the Tiv people "are under attacks from by Jukun ethnic militias in recent times.

"A peace meeting at Jootar, a border town between Benue and Taraba States convened by one Rev Father Dankaro and other priests to sue for peace was truncated.

"Thursday morning, Vaase, a border town was attacked by Jukuns. More than 12 people were killed. Probably on reprisal this morning, Chonku, a border Jukun settlement, was attacked.

"As I am talking to you now, looting, arson and killing within and around villages of Tiv people is going on and hundreds of Tivs have fled to Benue state," he said.

With the renewed crisis, the Chairman of Wukari Local Government Area, Mr. Daniel Adi and his Ukum counterpart in Benue State, Mr. Iber Logo accused each other of escalating the crisis after a peace accord was brokered last week.

Adi, who confirmed the outbreak of crisis in the area, said many were feared killed and houses burnt in the last five days of fighting.

"I have since reached out to the Chairman of Ukum Local Government Area in neighbouring Benue and the Security Adviser to the Benue Governor and we are making efforts to stop the escalation of the crisis.

"Our people have realised that there is no need fighting the Tiv people. But the Tiv people have continued their onslaught on Jukun villages. The Chairman of Ukum Local Government Area and his chiefs knew the boys doing this. But they do not want to fish them out.

"Tiv youths in the early hours of Saturday came and burnt down Chonku village. I want to appeal to the Chairman of Ukum and the Ter Ukum to fish out these youths and disciplinary actions taken against them in the interest of peace."

In his response, Logo described Adi's allegations as laughable and unfounded, saying Adi was harbouring a deep hatred for the Tiv people while accusing him of leading armed youths to set Tiv communities ablaze.

Narrating his involvement in the crisis, Logo explained that it was the burning of the entire Tse-Atsenga community in Ukum local government by youths from Kente village in Wukari that compelled his intervention.

He said, "It was after the attack on Tse Atsenga that I called the Chairman of Wukari and we met at Kente. unfortunately the chairman came with armed Jukun youths and dropped them at Igbogom Village.

"While we were holding the peace meeting at Kente, Jukun Youths started shooting and I made efforts to leave but be pleaded with me to stay. After the meeting, a Jukun girl was caught in the bush. I prevented the girl from being harmed.

"I personally presented the girl to the Aku Uka of Wukari during the peace meeting at his palace. If I do not want peace, I would not have been making all these efforts," Logo explained.