

40 killed, 500 houses torched in Bodo, Mogho communal clash

By George Onah

PORT HARCOURT— OVER 500 houses have been reduced to rubbles and about 40 people killed in the nearly five days of communal strife between Ogoni towns of Bodo and Mogho, Gokana local government of Rivers State.

Mogho community appears to bear the brunt of the destruction. Both police and Council headquarters agreed that the casualty rate was high but none was categorical. Community sources said not less than 37 bodies were counted on Saturday night.

Council Chairman, Fred Kpakol, stated Monday, in a phone chat that fighting had abated, but that "the high casualty rate" was worrisome, stating that he had requested for more police detachments to be deployed to the two communities.

The state Commissioner for Finance, Mr. Kenneth Kobani, who hails from Bodo blamed the crisis on some "youth leaders in the area. He said those behind the mayhem should be arrested and severely dealt with" for causing so much horror in the communities.

In the same vein, leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, Mr. Ledum Mitee, said it was shocking that so much destruction could be visited on the feuding communities. He said the movement stood for peace and was getting both sides to tow the path of peace.

But representatives of the council in the state House of Assembly, Gabriel Piedomson took a swipe at cultists and sponsors of the vice in the council area. Piedomson who said he narrowly escaped death, last week, disclosed that his father's house was razed,

He was of the view that his life was being threatened because he criticized the evil

activities of cultists and their barons. Piedomson said he would continue to condemn cultism, "even in the face of death, because practitioners of the vice" were angels of human and material destruction.

Ogoni Youth Coalition Against Electoral Violence said that the lull in the fighting should not be seen as translating to cessation of hostilities or that peace had returned to the place. It urged the government to move in for a permanent peace amongst the feuding parties.

Police PRO, Ireju Barasua (a

DSP), told *Vanguard*, Monday, through phone that "the situation was tense but it is now calm. Fighting has stopped for now. Policemen have been deployed there to bring the situation under control. I will get in touch with the DPO there and let you know more".

Vanguard gathered that the immediate cause of the inter communal war was the beheading of a woman from Mogho town last Thursday, while the remote cause was the under current of animosity between Bodo and Mogho over a parcel of land.

Edo PDP accuses Igbinedion

By Simon Ebegbulem

BENIN—THE Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Edo State says it has uncovered plot by the Governor Lucky Igbinedion-led administration to dissolve the administration of local government councils in the state in order to install members of the opposition Action Congress (AC) as caretaker committee chairmen.

But in a swift reaction, the state government through the Chief Press Secretary to the state government, Mr. Lucky Wasa, denied the allegation, stressing that as a founding member of the PDP, it would be unfair to accuse the governor of working towards the success of the Action Congress in the forthcoming elections.

In a press conference addressed by the Vice Chairman of the party and the Edo South senatorial leader, Chief Sunny Uyigwe, the party alleged that the governor had earlier attempted to lobby some principal officers in the House of Assembly to secure their support in order to dissolve the council but it failed.

"He now decided to use the

Edo State Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC) to ask the elected council officials who will want to re-contest to resign so that they can put in place their puppets and stooges to assist them at the grassroots to manipulate the outcome of the April general elections in favour of the Action Congress" he stated.

According to him "we also want to place on record that leading functionaries of the state government who are in this desperation to destroy the PDP have benefited immensely from the party more than the founding members but they want to destroy the party now because of their selfish ambition. But we are calling on the respected chairman of EDSIEC, Justice Okungowa, not to succumb to the pressures from the state government because we are aware that they are hell bent on destroying the PDP."

But countering the allegations, Wasa asserted that "the governor has no intention of dissolving councils, he has always said it that they will run their full tenure. Secondly, the governor recently furnished the PDP secretariat and provided a 60KVA generator to the party."