



JUST a MINUTE

8 feared dead, houses destroyed over land dispute

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NO fewer than eight persons are feared dead while a petrol station and several houses have been set ablaze following bloody clash that broke out between two communities in Ukwuani local government area of Delta state in the early hours of Wednesday and escalated on Thursday night.

Police, however confirmed only three deaths and said that they found two headless bodies and another lifeless body.

The State Police Commissioner, Mr. Hezekiah Dimka raced to the scene as early as 5am yesterday to see things for himself. While there, he immediately ordered for a reinforcement of three Mobile police units comprising of about 200 mobile policemen.

The two affected communities are Umuebu and Umuese. But while the offensive broke out between the two warring communities over a protracted land dispute, another neighbouring, called Ezionu was drawn into the crisis.

State Police command's spokesperson, Miss Olabisi Okuwobi confirmed yesterday that the people of Umuebu had

earlier sent a petition to the command, in which they claimed that they (Umuebu) secured a Supreme Court judgment in their favour over the disputed vast land since 1971 but had been continuously harassed over the same land.

Okuwobi said trouble started on Wednesday when some of the farmers of Umuebu community, taking advantage of the farming season began their farming activities on the land, but were accosted by the Umuese, adding that attempt by the police to hold a peace meeting with the two communities were defeated as Umuese people shunned the meetings.

According to her the third community — Ezionu got involved when some *okada* operators from there were allegedly harassed while crossing Umuese.

"When the news of the harassment got to the traditional ruler of Ezionu, he sent an emissary of about 8 chiefs but these people were beaten up at Umuese which we learnt angered the people, so it was the people of Ezionu that burnt those houses not Umuebu", said the PPRO.