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Seven killed as students, Benue community clash

Written by Peter Duru
Thursday, 05 March 2009

MAKURDI—A bloody clash between the host community of the College of Education Oju in Benue State and students of the institution has resulted in the death of no fewer than seven persons in the last two days forcing the imposition of a dusk to dawn curfew on Oju local government area by the state government.

The crisis which has overwhelmed the entire area has forced a sudden migration of natives and students alike who have scamped for safety in neighbouring communities and towns.

According to our sources, crisis erupted Tuesday when a female member of the host community had gone into the school premises to fetch water at the only functional borehole in the area resulting in trouble between her and a Tiv student over who should fetch water first.

The slight disagreement snowballed into a fight prompting the native to dash to the nearby Oju police station to register a complaint and seek cover.

Her complaint necessitated the arrest of the Tiv student which sparked a reaction from fellow Tiv students who demanded the release of their colleague.

On getting wind of an impending crisis the school authorities stepped in and got the detained students released from the police .

But the action of the school authority, according to our source, came a little late as the Tiv student out of obvious frustration to get the sister out of detention took up arms and went rampaging burning houses and kiosk and looting.

An in apparent bid to defend themselves the host community also mobilized and unleashed terror on the student community and the resulting clashes led to deaths and injuries while many are yet to be accounted for. Speaking to Vanguard on the issue a student of the college who spoke on ground of anonymity currently taking refuge in Otukpo lamented the sudden crisis that has disrupted their studies.

He decried the absence of security in the school which pave way for intruders to gain entrance into the school saying that over the years the school has witnessed one clash or the other with its host community mostly centered on disagreements between students and members of the host community over the right to drink from the only available borehole in the school.

Meanwhile the statement by the Special Adviser to Governor Gabriel Suswam on Security Matters, Colonel Benjamin Abohol (rtd) and the Deputy Governor Chief Stephen Lawani has ordered the imposition of a dusk to dawn curfew on the college and town with all students expected to vacate their hostels immediately.



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