

presentation of food items and other relief materials to flood victims in the state by James Jephthah Foundation.

Jesse riot: 6 shot dead, 25 injured

... as angry villagers raze monarch's palace

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JESSE—SECURITY agents shot dead six persons and left about 25 others critically injured yesterday morning at Idierhe (Jesse) Kingdom in Ethiope-West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Vanguard was informed that soldiers opened fire when villagers who wanted to lynch a suspected ritualist stoned and prevented them from taking away the suspect from the palace of the monarch for interrogation.

In a reprisal attack, irate villagers razed the palace of Ovie of Idierhe, His Royal Majesty, Erhikevwe I, who, they suspected, invited the soldiers.

A source said: "Three persons were killed at first, but the death toll increased later, as the youths continued their attack on soldiers."

Soldiers, however, whisked the embattled monarch away from the palace to save his life.

As at 9.00 am when Vanguard visited Jesse, the palace was still burning.

"Jesse is on fire, soldiers are everywhere, there is tension, nobody knows what is going to happen next. This is disastrous," a concerned villager told Vanguard.

The palace itself was a

no-go area, as soldiers, who cordoned the bastion, refused our reporter access.

Spokesperson of the Police in Delta State, Mr. Charles Muka, told Vanguard: "Please, give me some time, we are still gathering information on what happened."

At about 2.00 pm, Muka called to confirm that three persons were shot dead, one hospitalised and 12 others arrested in connection with the incident, adding that the Police did not shoot anybody.

Trouble supposedly started when the villagers seized a man, suspected to be a ritualist, and brought him to the palace of the king, expecting that he would authorise them to carry out jungle justice on the suspect.

For two weeks running, a source said, ritualists had been on the rampage in the area, killing about nine persons, a development that made the monarch to set up a committee to probe the development.

It was gathered that the villagers mounted a search party and the efforts reportedly paid off when one of the suspected ritualists was nabbed in the bush and brought to the palace.

The monarch, however, resisted the pleas of his people to lynch the suspect and consequently invited security agents to handle the matter.

He urged the people to allow security agents to interrogate the suspect and get more information about the activities of his gang.

His subjects, particular-

ly the youths, were angry that soldiers came to take away the suspect for interrogation and stoned them.

"They tried to stop the soldiers who came lawfully take away the suspect and that made the soldiers to shoot indiscriminately, gunning down about three persons in the first instance, another person later died," the source stated.

Hell was let loose in Jesse when the people saw that some persons had been shot dead.

"That was what made them to attack and set the palace ablaze," he added.

As at 10.00 am, soldiers had taken over the streets of Jesse, while some of those injured were seen being taken to the hospital for treatment.

....As Delta House urges Uduaghan to intervene

BY EMMA AMAIZE &
FESTUS AHON

A SABA—DELTA State House of Assembly, yesterday, passed a resolution urging the governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, to direct the Commissioner of Police and other security agencies in the state to move into Jesse and restore order to the troubled community.

Six persons were feared dead in the community

and the palace of the monarch was razed by an angry mob over the king's refusal to allow them to lynch a suspected ritualist.

The motion, which was moved under matters of urgent public importance by the member, representing Ethiope West Local Government Area, John Nani, was unanimously adopted by the lawmakers.

He said there was total anarchy in the area be-

cause of the incident, adding that the order was to allow for proper investigation.

Majority Leader, Chief Monday Igbuya, Keston Okoro, Dennis Omovie and others, who spoke in favour of the motion, stressed the need for immediate action to avoid a spillover of the crisis.

Deputy Speaker, Basil Ganagana, who chaired the session, agreed that the situation should be brought under control.

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