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## Land dispute: 2 feared dead, village sacked, 3,000 homeless in Otukpo

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By Peter Duru

**MAKURDI**—Two persons were feared dead, weekend, while close to 3,000 people have fled their homes following a protracted bloody land dispute between inhabitants of Ondo-Ugboju village and Ogobia community all in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

*Vanguard* learned that the crisis which had lingered over a period of time was a fall-out of disagreements between the locals over the original owners of Ogobia community, a fast developing settlement in the outskirts of

Otukpo town.

According to our source, the rural dwellers in Ondo-Ugboju had persistently laid claims to Ogobia community and also regarded residents in the area as visitors, who had no rights of sales or permanent ownership of any parcel of land in the town.

“That is just the reason for this crisis which led to yesterday’s killing of the two young men, who were engaged by the Otukpo Caretaker Chairman, Ijachi Udeh, to work in his site at Ondo-Ugboju.”

Continuing, the source said: “For a very long time the people of Ondo-Ugboju have continually claimed that they owned Ogobia town and that those residing there were visitors.

“They also claimed that the ‘visitors’ in Ogobia were selling parcels of land without authorization from the original owners of the area warning that any further sales would be resisted.

“However the claims and threats were resisted by the inhabitants of the fast growing community which is less than 20 minutes drive from Otukpo town. They also claim ownership of the area.

“Their resistance led to this dispute which has lingered over time resulting in the death of innocent lives and sacking of over 3,000 inhabitants of Ondo-Ugboju, rendered homeless.”

Though the Otukpo Caretaker Chairman could not be reached on phone, the Benue State Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Assistant Superintendent, ASP, Moses Yamu, who confirmed the development, said