

## 10 killed in fresh Agatu communal crisis, 20 declared missing, scores injured

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*Alhaji Audu the notorious wanted militia leader in Agatu arrested by the military*

**Military apprehends wanted notorious militia leader, other**

**By Peter Duru**

10 persons were in the early hours of Sunday feared dead, while scores sustained injuries and over 20 persons still declared missing in a bloody communal conflict involving Egba, Adugbe and Adana communities in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue state.

**Vanguard** gathered that the crisis, which erupted at about 6 am, was executed with the help of mercenaries some of whom have been arrested by troops of the **military** spike operation codenamed Operation Whirl Stroke, OPWS.

According to a community leader in the area who spoke on condition of anonymity, two communities, Egba and Adugbe had mobilised their youths and also hired mercenaries who stormed Adana village when the people were preparing to head to church for Sunday service.

According to the source “what happened was that Egba and Adugbe communities ganged up with hired mercenaries to attack Adana community this morning at about 6 am for reasons we do not know though we know that their relationship has always been like that of cat and dog.

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“From there, they went to Olegeje community and also attacked the people after which they pulled out. But while pulling out and returning back to Aila village, the troops of the Operation Whirl Stroke got wind of their evil mission and arrested five of them.

“As we speak, they have taken the military to where they keep their guns and they are mentioning more names of boys from Akwu Village who participated in the attack. Akwu is one of the villages that have been at the centre of the crisis in Agatu. They also mentioned names of those that played roles in the crisis.

“I must say that the situation was saved by the timely intervention of soldiers because we would have witnessed a bloody reprisal. In fact, the troops are everywhere in Agatu, searching the entire place and arresting the masterminds.

Continuing, he said: “So far, 10 bodies have been recovered at Adana, 20 persons are still missing while several others were said to have sustained injuries.

“Interestingly, a wanted notorious local militia leader popularly known as Alhaji Audu who was dressed in military camouflage was among the five persons that have been arrested by the military. He was arrested with one Ak 47 rifle and 60 round of live ammunition.

“They have all been taken to Obagaji the local government headquarters while the search for other suspects is ongoing. It is quite unfortunate and sad experience I must say,” he added.

When contacted, the Force Commander of OPWS, Maj. Gen. Adeyemi Yekini who declined comments on the matter referred journalists to the Defense Headquarters (DHQ) Information Department for details.

On her part, the State Police Public Relations Officer, Deputy Superintendent, DSP, Catherine Anene who confirmed the attack said the police had recovered three corpses.