

NEWS

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Three killed, houses razed as Benue youths clash over electricity outage



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Obi and Otukpo Local Government areas of Benue State, respectively.

It was gathered that the crisis between the communities erupted on Monday morning over three days of electricity outage by the Jos Electricity Distribution Company, JED.

The youths of Obi were not happy with the blackout, so they allegedly attempted to tamper with the power lines.

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According to a source who spoke on condition of anonymity, “the youths of Ijegwu suspected that Otupko youths had sabotaged the high tension line which supplies power to Obi and Oju at a JED Isolation Switch located near Ijegwu community.

“And on getting to the switch to tamper with it, some of the youths were allegedly attacked by persons suspected to be Ojantele youths, which led to the death of one of them, with others injured.

“The Ijegwu youths went back and mobilised for a counter-attack, which led to the death of two more persons and the burning down of several houses in the Otukpo community.

“As we speak the communities have been deserted but there is every indication that the burning of houses and killing might continue in the days ahead.”

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Speaking on the issue, the Otukpo Regional Manager of JED, Olaniyi Ogunmakinya said: “What actually happened is that there is what we call isolators, which we use to segment our network if there are problems on our lines in some areas.

“We use it to isolate those areas and allow others to have an electricity supply, while we work on the areas that have problems.

“We have that isolator located towards the end of Otukpo Local Government linking Obi. When it rained a few days ago and we had our lines destroyed, we had to isolate the affected areas to enable us to work on the lines.

“But unfortunately, whenever we do this to repair the lines, the people on the Obi Local Government side will not be happy that we are isolating them to repair the lines; they would prefer that everyone is denied power supply instead of isolating them alone before the repairs.

“So from what I heard, two days ago they allegedly matched to that isolation point to sabotage it.

“But the youths of the community that would be affected by their action resisted them, which led to the conflict.

“That is the much I know. I cannot tell whether they killed each other or not. From the report, I got they did not destroy our facilities.

“It was the attempt to sabotage our Isolator that was resisted by the youths of Otukpo.”

Contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Superintendent Catherine Anene, who confirmed the development, said she had received a sketchy report on the matter and was yet to get full details of what happened.