

# Benue govt imposes curfew as communal crisis claims 3 persons

By Peter Duru

**MAKURDI** —Three communal crises in Gwer and Oju Local Government Areas of Benue State have reportedly claimed the lives of three persons, leading to the imposition of a curfew on Oju town.

The warring parties also razed several houses and food barns in the affected communities leading to the injury and displacement of many.

It was gathered that the protracted crisis in Gwer council between neighbouring Mbasombo and Mbaivur communities erupted again, yesterday morning following a reprisal attack.

An indigene of the area, who spoke on condition of anonymity, disclosed his private residence in the community, which was less than 10 kilometres from Makurdi town was late last year razed in one of the ceaseless crises in the communities.

He explained that crisis erupted again yesterday, after an indigene of Mbaivur was said to have been killed, weekend, by Mbasombo youths while working on his farm.

He said: "On hearing about the murder of their kinsman, Mbaivur youths ordered Mbasombo people to immediately produced the perpetrators of the act.

"Before that particular incident, five persons were also killed in Mbaivur community by Mbasombo youths earlier in the same crisis some weeks ago, whose corpses were deposited at the mortuary.

"And after the murder of the man in his farm, the people decided to bury him alongside the five in the mortuary.

"It was during their burial that those who supposedly killed the man came and starting shooting sporadically in Mbaivur.

"However, the people succeeded in burying the man and the five corpses. Today, they staged a reprisal on Mbasombo community, burning down houses and the market in the community.

"I do not know if lives were lost today, but some persons have been injured and people are fleeing their homes for fear of being killed. It is unfortunate that this crisis between brothers has defied every peace initiative."

Meanwhile the crisis in Oju council was reported to have claimed two lives after the youths of Ibilla and Oju communities engaged themselves in a bloody fight over the citing of a private



*Property destroyed.*



*Some of the arrested persons.*

tertiary institution on a piece of land both parties were laying claims to.

It was gathered that an academic from Ibilla community, who is based in Australia, Prof. Johnson Agbenya, had attracted the university to the area and the dispute over the land where the institution would be situation triggered the killing of two persons and burning of several houses, including cars and motorbikes.

"The youths, instead of celebrating the feat, took up arms against each other, claiming that one community wanted to claim their land in the name of university.

"For no justifiable reasons, they started burning down houses and two persons were

said to have been killed and several others sustained injuries."

## Dusk-to-dawn curfew

Meanwhile, the Benue State government has imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew on the communities, while the police said they have also arrested 21 persons in connection with the crisis.

Deputy governor of the state, Dr. Sam Ode, who visited the effected communities, expressed shock at the level of destruction.

Condemning the action of the youths, Ode said a judicial commission of enquiry had been ordered to ascertain the cause of the incident.