

C-River, Benue communities' land dispute claims 10 lives



By Ike Uchekukwu & Emma Una

CALABAR—Seven persons, mainly young people, were feared killed, yesterday, following continued boundary disputes between Ijegu-Yache community of Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State and Mbaaka community of Konshisha Local Government Area of Benue State.

It was gathered that 10 people have been killed in all since the clash started on Sunday. No fewer than 15 houses were also set ablaze in the ongoing rift between the youths from both communities.

Sources said 10 persons, including women from both sides were injured, many with machete cuts on their necks, foreheads and legs.

The dispute, which has lasted for years, has claimed many lives and property with many hospitalised.

A community leader in Yache, Augustine Adula, told Vanguard that they were in a church service when the mayhem started.

His words: "Few of our youths went to enquire from the Tiv settlers, why they have refused to pay royalties as usual for settling on our lands. The Tiv people seized one of our youths, beat him and he died.

"Of course, that triggered a reprisal. But they were prepared. They attacked and killed seven of our people and burnt 15 houses."

Secretary of Yala and Cross River North Elders Forum, Leonard Anyogo, a Yache son, also confirmed the killing in a chat with newsmen.

Anyogo, who described the latest violence as unfortunate, disclosed that the two deputy governors from both states had earlier met in the same community, where they appealed for peace whilst they handled the issue.

He said there has not been a clear cut boundary demarcation, adding that the land in dispute was actually where the boundary of the then Southern and Northern Protectorates was, which really was a Yache land.

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He also confirmed that the state government and security agencies have stepped into the matter.

Contacted, state Police Public Relations Officer, Irene Ugbo, confirmed the incident, adding that their men have been deployed to the area to restore peace.

She said: "The crisis in Yala is true. We are aware and we have deployed our men. As I speak to you, they are on ground.

"We are appealing for calm on both sides because killing and maiming won't solve the problem, only peaceful dialogue is the solution."

