

Akwa Ibom Police Nab 2 Masqueraders Over Killings, Robbery

By **Inibong Ekponta** 2 Days Ago in News



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The Akwa Ibom State Police Command has arrested two masqueraders and vowed to prosecute those involved in violent activities across the state.

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This followed recent attacks by the dreaded Ekpo masquerades, who are alleged to have been involved in machete assaults, armed robbery, and the killing of unsuspecting residents.

There was outrage at the weekend when a motorcyclist conveying a lady along the Abak-Ikot Ekpene Highway lost their lives while attempting to escape an attack by the menacing masqueraders.

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“A man or woman who is a non-initiate is not supposed to sight the Ekpo masquerades. So, immediately the motorcyclist saw them brandishing shiny cutlasses, he diverted into the other lane, unaware of an oncoming vehicle that rammed into them and killed them instantly,” an eyewitness, Etop-Abasi Nsek, told our correspondent.

The Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Dr Anieti Udofia, has expressed concern over the growing menace of masqueraders, noting that if not curtailed or banned outright, their activities could deface the state’s much-vaunted tourism architecture.

Addressing journalists at the Ministry of Information, Udofia, who frowned at the unwarranted attacks on citizens by the Ekpo masquerades, disclosed that the governor would soon issue an Executive Order to regulate masquerade activities in the state.

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Meanwhile, the State Police Command has vowed that no stone will be left unturned in prosecuting and securing justice against masqueraders who hide under cultural practices to commit crimes.

The police alleged that the suspects were arrested for a series of criminal offences, including illegal assembly, armed blockade of a public highway, and extortion.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Timfon John, told journalists that the arrests followed a distress call from a concerned citizen reporting the illegal activities of a masquerade group attacking residents, blocking a public road, and extorting money from passers-by.

John explained that “The perpetrators, armed with spears, machetes, sticks, and other weapons, were also physically assaulting members of the public, including NYSC members.”

She identified the leader of the Ekpo masquerade group as one Uwem Umanah, aged 45, who allegedly authorised members to wear masks and parade in public despite an existing ban on such displays.

“Upon receipt of the information, operatives of the Command were immediately dispatched to the scene and arrested the alleged mastermind, one Uwem Umanah.

“In a related development, one David Michael, aged 34, of Ikot Obong Edong village, was arrested at Ukana Onuk village while in possession of complete masquerade costumes and preparing to invade the area.

“The two suspects have been charged to court following a thorough investigation into the matter.

“The Commissioner of Police, Baba Azare, reassures the general public of the Command’s unwavering commitment to maintaining public safety and order.

“The police will not tolerate acts of lawlessness, intimidation, or violence under any guise, including the unauthorised use of cultural paraphernalia to perpetrate crime.

“Members of the public are urged to continue providing timely and useful information to the police to prevent crime and ensure that all communities remain safe and secure for lawful activities,” she added.