

# Probe begins as gunmen kill six in Anambra

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Illustration image: Gunmen

| By Ikenna Obianeri

The Anambra State Police Command says it has begun an investigation to apprehend the armed hoodlums who carried out separate attacks that killed no fewer than six persons in two communities in the state on Sunday.

PUNCH Metro gathered that some yet-to-be-ascertained armed assailants launched a brutal attack at St Andrews Anglican Church, Isiokwe, in the Lilu community of the Ihiala Local Government Area, in the early hours of Sunday, killing two persons, burning vehicles, and setting ablaze the cleric's apartment and parts of the church building.

Our correspondent, who visited the church premises on Monday, gathered that the wife of the church priest was among the two persons killed, while others sustained varying degrees of injuries.

The premises and surrounding area appeared deserted, with properties seen littering the place.

Some eyewitnesses and residents confirmed to PUNCH Metro that the attack, which occurred in the early hours of Sunday, disrupted church activities and created widespread panic.

One of the sources said, “A brutal attack occurred at the St Andrews Anglican Church, Isiokwe, in the Lilu community of Ihiala LGA in the early hours of today (Sunday).

“The heavily armed hoodlums invaded the church as worshippers were getting ready for Sunday activity and started shooting, setting properties on the church premises, including buildings, ablaze.

“Unfortunately, they brutally murdered the wife of the church priest and one other person. They also injured many others, razed down the priest’s house to ashes, and burnt down some church vehicles and other church properties, including a part of the main church building.

“This wicked act on a holy day in a Christian church and in a Christian community has not had a single mention from those who are quick to share happenings from elsewhere.”

Later the same day, PUNCH Metro gathered that some armed hoodlums suspected to be members of a cult gang opened fire near the Afor Market Junction in the Nawfia community, Njikoka Local Government Area, killing no fewer than four persons and injuring several others.

“It was chaos. The attackers came out of nowhere this evening in a commando-like fashion and started shooting indiscriminately,” an eyewitness near the scene told our correspondent.

Video footage of both incidents circulating online showed victims lying in pools of blood, while burnt vehicles and parts of the church premises were still emitting smoke.

The spokesperson for the state police command, Tochukwu Ikenga, confirmed both attacks in separate statements issued on Monday.

Ikenga said four persons were killed in the violent attack near Afor Market Junction in Nawfia, while two persons died in the church attack.

He attributed the market attack to cult-related violence, adding that the Police Command, on the orders of the Commissioner of Police, CP Ikioye Orutugu, had launched an investigation into both incidents and was working to apprehend the perpetrators.

In the statement on the market attack, he said, “The Anambra State Police Command wishes to provide a comprehensive update on the cult-related attack that occurred on the evening of December 7, 2025, at Afor Nawfia Market, along the Onitsha–Awka Old Road.

“It will be recalled that operatives of the Command attached to the Special Anti-Cult Squad, Enugwu-Ukwu, had, four days earlier, acting on credible intelligence about a planned rival cult confrontation, arrested two dangerous suspects and recovered a firearm from them.

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“The arrested suspects have been assisting the police with valuable information aimed at preventing further cult-related violence within Awka and its environs.

“Despite these proactive efforts by the Command operatives, some members of the same gang, on the evening of December 7, 2025, operating in a black Lexus Jeep with a registration number yet unknown, stormed Afor Nawfia Market and opened fire indiscriminately.

“The violent attack resulted in the death of four persons, after which the assailants fled the scene.

“Although the hoodlums escaped before police arrival, preliminary information obtained at the scene has provided useful leads, and the Command is already acting on them to ensure the perpetrators are tracked down and arrested.”

He stated that the Anambra State Police Command remains resolute in its determination to rid the state of cultism, violent crime, and all forms of criminality.

“Further developments will be communicated as investigations progress,” he added.

Regarding the church attack, Ikenga said police operatives were already following every lead and that no resource would be spared in ensuring that those responsible were apprehended and brought to justice.

He said, “The Commissioner of Police, Anambra State Police Command, CP Ikioye Orutugu, has condemned in the strongest terms the attack on the morning of December 7, 2025, carried out by armed criminals, which resulted in the death of one person.

“Some persons were inflicted with serious injuries, including the church building partially burnt, and other properties destroyed at a church premises in Lilu, Ihiala Local Government Area of the state.

“The CP states that this heinous and abominable act, committed against innocent worshippers, is not only an assault on the community but also a grave affront to our shared values of peace, sanctity of life, and freedom of worship.

“The Command extends its deepest sympathies to the families of the victims and to the entire Lilu community and assures the public that the police shall relentlessly hunt down the perpetrators of this crime.

“The CP notes that no community should be subjected to such brutality, as the Command will not allow criminals to instil fear or destabilise the peace we are working tirelessly to maintain.

“In view of the above, the Command has already intensified intelligence-driven operations, deployed the Joint Security Team, and strengthened surveillance across the area.”

According to him, the Command urges residents to remain calm and cooperate with the Joint Security Team by providing useful information that can assist ongoing investigations for justice to be served.

“The Command remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting lives and property across Ihiala and the entire state,” he added.

*The Lilu community, in Ihiala LGA and bordering Imo State, has been under the grip of gunmen for many months.*

## | Ikenna Obianeri

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