

Cultists kill UNIBEN student, injure 3 others in Benin, Edo condemns murder

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By Rapheal





From **Tony Osauzo**, Benin

Gunmen suspected to be cultists on Sunday shot dead an undergraduate of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and injured three others in a violent attack.

The attack reportedly occurred at about 6 p.m. along the Benin-Lagos Road, directly in front of the university's main gate.



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Witnesses said the deceased, identified as Alexander, was driving a Mercedes-Benz GLK out of the campus with two other occupants when he was intercepted by another unregistered white GLK Mercedes-Benz carrying masked gunmen.

According to eyewitness accounts, the attackers immediately opened fire on the vehicle at close range, targeting the driver's side before speeding away from the scene.

Alexander, said to be a student in the Political Science Department's irregular programme, had reportedly completed his examination about an hour before the attack.

Three other victims, including a female passerby struck during the shooting, reportedly sustained gunshot injuries and were rushed to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital for treatment.

Edo State Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, confirmed the incident yesterday, saying that one person died while three others were injured.

She said preliminary investigation showed that the victims were driving out of the university gate when another white GLK intercepted them and opened fire.

“The gunmen opened fire on the vehicle at close range, injuring the three occupants and a female passerby whose identity is yet to be ascertained,” she said.

According to her, Alexander was confirmed dead at the hospital, while the other victims are currently receiving treatment.

She added that the Commissioner of Police, Monday Agbonika, had ordered a full investigation to identify and arrest those responsible for the attack.

Meanwhile, the management of the University of Benin distanced the institution from the incident, insisting that the clash occurred outside the campus and was linked to cult-related violence.

In a statement by the university’s Public Relations Officer, Dr Benedicta Ehanire, the institution said preliminary reports indicated that the incident did not involve any staff or students of the university.

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“The University of Benin has dissociated its staff and students from the violent clash outside the Ugbowo Campus of the institution.

“Management of the university, while expressing regrets over the reported fatality, urges members of the university community to remain vigilant and go about their academic activities peacefully,” she said.

Meanwhile, Governor Monday Okpebholo has condemned the murder.

“The brazen and cold-blooded killing on a day regarded as sacred by many is an affront to human dignity, a threat to public safety, and an attack on everything this administration stands for. It is completely unacceptable,” the governor said in a statement signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Dr Patrick Akhere.

Okpebholo extended condolences to the family, friends, and associates of the deceased, whose life was violently and senselessly cut short.

“The Edo State Police Command has commenced investigations into the incident, while security agencies are working round the clock to identify and apprehend all those responsible. They may run, but they cannot hide forever.

“Governor Okpebholo assures the public and the family of the victim that the case will not be swept under the rug. The perpetrators will be found and justice will be served,” the statement added.

The governor reiterated his administration’s firm resolve to stamp out cultism in all its forms across Edo State, saying that since assuming office, his administration has taken deliberate and sustained steps to confront the cult menace head-on.

He listed the efforts to include sustained security operations in cult-prone communities across the state, resulting in the arrest and prosecution of numerous suspected cultists; close collaboration between the Edo State Government and the Nigerian Police Force, the Department of State Services, and the Nigerian Army to disrupt and dismantle cult networks operating within the state.

Besides, he outlined community engagement initiatives involving traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth groups, and civil society organisations in the fight against cult violence, as well as strong support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of young persons vulnerable to cult recruitment, recognising that long-term peace requires both enforcement and prevention.

“These efforts are already yielding results. However, the murder of a young person in broad daylight is a grim reminder that the battle is far from over and that the government must continue to intensify its efforts.

“Edo State will not be a sanctuary for criminals. Those who carry arms and terrorise innocent people will face the full consequences of the law,” Governor Okpebholo stressed.

The statement urged members of the public with useful information regarding the killing to contact the Edo State Police Command or any other security agency

immediately, assuring that all information provided would be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

It further assured that the Edo State Government remains fully committed to securing every community and every part of the state, so that no family will have to endure the pain of losing a loved one to senseless cult violence.