

# Anambra burns again

- Suspected MASSOB members attack Nnewi police station
- Obi: They won't go unpunished
- Police chief blames rulers

**T**HERE seems to be no let-up in the violence that has seized Anambra State by the throat in the past one month.

In a repeat of the Onitsha incident, members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and policemen clashed at the weekend. The Nnewi Central police station was burnt down in a clash that left a police sergeant and two members of the group dead.

Fourteen suspects at the police station were released. They included four notorious armed robbers

From Nwanosike Onu, Awka

being interrogated. Besides, over 25 persons were injured.

Five vehicles were burnt. They included three operational vehicles, four motorcycles and a BMW 7 Series at the police station.

Two other police officers are lying critically ill at an undisclosed hospital at Nnewi.

The suspected MASSOB members, numbering over 250, stormed the Nnewi police station yesterday with sophisticated guns, shooting sporadically.

**Obi: Nothing will stop us in our determination to chase away these miscreants. Not only that. They will be brought to book. We will never allow miscreants in Anambra**

They came in six buses. They cordoned off both ends of Nnewi/Ozubulu road and overpowered the police officers.

Governor Peter Obi said he was determined to stop the orgy of violence.

The governor, who came into office on March 17, said he would ensure that all the "criminal elements" in the

state are brought to justice very soon.

"Nothing will stop us in our determination to chase away these miscreants. Not only that. They will be brought to book. We will never allow miscreants in Anambra.

"There is no room for them here. Let them try again, we are ready for them. I want to

assure the people of Anambra that we are on top of the situation," he said.

He promised to pay the hospital bills of the injured officers and rebuild the burnt station.

Though no arrest has been made, the acting State police commissioner, Mr. Haruna John, said the miscreants would not go unpunished.

Briefing reporters immediately after the incident, Haruna blamed the traditional rulers and town union leaders for not helping the police by condemning the spate of violence.

According to him, some of them have been threatened by the hoodlums, that in the event of divulging any secret concerning MASSOB, vengeance would be visited on them, their property and families.

This, according to Haruna, should not have stopped them from passing information to the police to get at the miscreants.

His words: "Well, I cannot really say we are getting much from those categories of personalities you mentioned. We have been appealing to them, but they prefer to keep quiet"

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He went on: "Some, probably out of fear of reprisal attacks, some, as we were told, had already been threatened and warned that in the event of their divulging any secret concerning MASSOB, vengeance will be visited on them, their property and their families.

"We are aware that a lot of landlords and people who are probably well-to-do in certain areas were forced into parting with huge sums of money or buying foodstuffs even to the extent of buying firearms for them under threat. They equally subject some of these victims to some sort of oath and trial by ordeal and that tells you the kind of situation we have found ourselves here."

The police boss disclosed that the incident happened at 2pm with the hoodlums appearing in military camouflage and bullet-proof jackets, armed with sophisticated firearms, including A-K 47s, pump

action guns and other assorted fire arms.

Haruna said that when the state police command learnt the previous day that MASSOB members had mounted a roadblock on Nnewi/Nnobi road, the joint team of MOPOL officers, men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and soldiers who had been on their trail were alerted but because of "their local effective intelligence network," they managed to move away from where they assembled before his men got to the place.

He disclosed that he had dispatched his men to various hospitals and clinics in the localities to search for those that escaped with injuries, so that they could be interrogated, adding that some of the militants were well trained in jungle warfare and that was why they succeeded in attacking the police station.

He said: "Some of our men fought gallantly. A sergeant was killed. Many of them

were injured, two are currently hospitalised, seriously injured, more than 15 sustained various degrees of injuries and as you can see, they burnt down the police station."

"Our men were overwhelmed, they burnt three of our operational vehicles and one other vehicle there, destroyed and burnt adjoining structures, all the louvres smashed. They released about 14 of the suspects in custody, including four notorious armed robbers undergoing interrogation".

"They managed to disappear before reinforcement could come from Awka and Onitsha. We have distributed our men to various nooks and crannies. We must put a stop to this, we must get them; they cannot go unpunished to the last person who took part in this operation and other operations in the state, that is what we want to assure."