

Bloodbath in S/East: Police mobilize against IPOB terror

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Details of the forceful attempt of members of the outlawed secessionist group, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), to impose a complete shutdown on the South East region have revealed sordid tales of arson and bloodbath across the states.

At the weekend, no fewer than 10 people were reportedly killed in Anambra, Enugu and Imo states as hoodlums held the three states hostage for most hours of Friday and Saturday.

The details came in as police announced the mobilisation of its intelligence and operational assets to reign in the rampaging gunmen.

Reports from the area said the current spate of killings, escalated with the order for a 5-day stay-out-home issued by self-styled spokesman of the proscribed group, Simon Ekpa, starting from Thursday.

Finland-based Ekpa, who gained relevance in the activities of the outlawed group following the arrest and prosecution of IPOB's leader Nnamdi Kanu by the federal government, on December 6 via his social media accounts announced a total lockdown of the South East from December 9 to 14. He, however, said, there won't be a lockdown on December 13.

Gunmen, who operated on Friday in Owerri - Okigwe Road in Imo State as well as Umuachia in the Isiala Mbano LGA of the state and Umuanna in the Onuimo LGA killed at least 10 people, according to witnesses' accounts.

The gunmen also kidnapped two expatriates supervising the ongoing construction of phase II of the Owerri-Okigwe Road. The foreign workers, who are said to be staff of German construction giant, Cremburg, were kidnapped at Umuachia after two people suspected to be their security aides were killed.

Another killing occurred at Umuanna junction, where gunmen reportedly opened fire and killed two people. The footage of the two men lying in the pool of their blood has gone viral.

A witness, Isa Adamu, aka Ike, said no fewer than eight people were killed by gunmen in Umuanna town on Friday, including some mechanics who had gone to repair a vehicle in the town.

Owerri, the state capital, was not spared as the rampaging gunmen also killed Prince Chidi Iheme, the elder brother to Nollywood actor, Osita Iheme, popularly known as Pawpaw.

Iheme was killed at Ubomiri in Mbaitoli LGA of the state while on a campaign rally organised by the All



■ IG of Police, Usman Alkali Baba
Progressives Congress (APC)
candidate for Mbaitoli/Ikeduru
Federal Constituency, Akarachi
Amadi.

He was said to be in the same car with the state Commissioner for Solid Minerals, Martin Eke, who is currently recuperating from machete cuts inflicted on him by their attackers.

While condemning the attack, Akarachi in a statement by his media aide, Darlington Irobi, mourned the passing of Iheme.

In Enugu, the hoodlums were said to have killed two people at Park Lane while videos of other killings in the state also went viral.

The gunmen also attacked some police officers and set their operational truck ablaze at the New Market opposite the popular Colliery Hospital, Enugu.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, Enugu State, Ahmed Ammani, has ordered Area Commanders, Divisional Police Officers and commanders of all the Tactical/Operational Units of the Command to ensure the maximum deployment of all the command's intelligence and operational resources at their disposal, to effectively patrol and fish out miscreants that may want to disturb public peace and security, and or disrupt the businesses and otherwise activities of law-abiding citizens, under the guise of enforcing illegitimate sit-at-home order.

This was disclosed in a statement issued through the spokesman of the command, Daniel Ndukwe.

How 8 northerners were killed by gunmen in Imo - Witness

A resident of Imo State, who brought the corpse of his friend killed in the Friday attack at Umuanna to Jos for funeral, Isa Adamu, popularly known as Ike, said apart from the eight people killed, many others were injured.

"We conveyed eight corpses from the scene of the attack. But those killed were more than

eight. Some bodies cannot be traced and a good number of people were injured," Adamu said.

Adamu who is a mechanic in Lopkanta town of Umueneochi LGA of Abia State, and a friend to one of the deceased, told our correspondent that the incident occurred on Friday, around 1pm when suddenly, members of the outlawed group arrived the scene and opened fire on the victims.

Adamu said one of his colleagues, Auwal Abdulsalami, also a mechanic in Lopkanta, who was called on that Friday to repair a faulty truck in Umuanna town, was among the victims.

Our correspondent reports that Auwal's corpse arrived in Jos on Saturday night and was buried amidst tears in the early hours of yesterday.

Adamu said those who lost their lives in the incident included a mechanic, truck drivers and driver's assistants. He said the victims were from Plateau, Taraba and Nasarawa states.

According to the witness, "After the incident, we reported it at the nearby security checkpoint in the area but they told us that they were not authorised to go to the scene."

Adamu further explained that they conveyed the corpses to Lopkanta town and thereafter moved them to their various states of origin, recalling that "it was a bad situation that nobody is wishing to witness again."

"We went to Imo State as mechanics to sustain our lives and look at how my friend ended."

"What is happening now in Okigwe axis is beyond imagination. As I am talking to you now, hundreds of people are fleeing Okigwe LGA for their lives," he added.

The father of one of the victims, Abdulsalami Haruna Ibrahim, described the attack as unfortunate, saying late Auwal was the breadwinner of the family.

"I received the death of Auwal with great shock. I didn't expect it soon. It is painful but there is

nothing I could do. I have left everything in the hands of God.

"Auwal was a good young man. Himself and the other children contributed money to buy a car for me. He was the best amongst my children," he said.

We are in a panic - Northerners in South East

A truck driver, Adamu Shuaibu told *Daily Trust* that northerners are now in total panic in the South East, especially in Enugu and Imo states where the attacks escalated in the last few days.

"A friend who was a driver with Dangote was returning to the factory with an empty truck. He picked up some passengers by the roadside, amongst them were some Fulani. As he passed Ogbolo through one narrow road some young men block them, they accused the driver of conveying Fulani who they said were attackers coming to attack the Igbo."

"They made the accusation though none of the men was carrying anything harmful, they brought them down, about 20 of them including the driver and his assistants, they recorded them on video and killed them all. It was only one woman who was with them that they spared. They later burnt the corpses of the victims," he recounted.

He added that on Thursday evening around 9pm at the Lopkanta area, some northerners who were on their way to Enugu were also attacked by some youth who blocked the road and requested money.

"They asked for N1000 from them but they told them they didn't have money, they could only give them N500, the youths asked them to come out of the vehicle."

"As they open the door to come down, they opened fire on them killing two people instantly, while two others escaped with gunshot injuries. Those who escaped are now in hospital while the other two were buried at Lopkanta, this is the situation we are in. We need prayers," Shuaibu said.

He added that a driver and his assistant conveying sand to a road construction site in Imo State were also killed.

"There was another bus coming from Jos which was attacked where the driver and his passengers were also killed. The killings are too much and we don't know what the government is doing to curtail it," he added.

The South East zonal coordinator of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Muhammed Gidado, told *Daily Trust* that no less than 14 people were killed in the Dangote truck that was attacked.

He said northerners who are in the South East for their legitimate businesses are now

in fear, "even the indigenous people are not spared talk less of us who they term as foreigners," he added.

Battle over sit-at-home order

The sit-at-home order proclaimed by Ekpa continued to generate controversy.

Despite Kanu's lawyer, Ifeanyi Ejiofor and apex Igbo Socio-cultural organisation, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, denouncing the order, *Daily Trust* observed that it was largely successful owing to the threats and attacks by gunmen.

Our correspondent reported that major parks in Enugu and Imo were empty yesterday. The ever-busy Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway was also deserted as only few vehicles were seen on the route.

Most shops and businesses were forced to hurriedly close as a result of the sporadic shooting by gunmen.

The National Secretary of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Dr Chidozie Alex Ogbonnaya, said Ekpa's activities have been causing tension and destruction in Igboland.

Ohanaeze in the statement said, "The attention of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide has been drawn to a video broadcast circulating in the social media by one Mr Simon Ekpa directing the people of South East that "in preparation to stop the election from taking place in Biafraland, there should be a chain of sit-at-home on Friday, December 9, Saturday, December 10, Sunday, December 11, Monday, December 12 and Wednesday, December 14."

"The instruction added that "Tuesday, December 13, 2022, is set aside for the market and all these are in preparation for the exit of Biafra from Nigeria."

"Ohanaeze Ndigbo laments the unruly behaviour among Igbo youths. In their utopia, they think that they are making both name and cheap money, while in truth they are digging abysmal pits for themselves."

On his part, Ejiofor said the five-day sit-at-home order was not issued by Kanu-led IPOB.

"As a matter of fact, IPOB totally condemned and distanced itself from the sit-at-home that was ordered by some criminal elements, who are bent on destroying our homeland and people. This is contained in a statement I had issued on the 5th December 2022, as directed by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra; and also, in a statement issued by the leadership of IPOB on the 6th December 2022," he said.

Meanwhile, *Daily Trust* observed that Nigerians, especially those from the South East, have taken to social media to report Ekpa to different international authorities, especially the Finnish government.