

Cultists Unleash Terror In P/Harcourt • Seven Persons Killed

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THE scene could be likened to one from an American gangster movie. But in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, yesterday, it was a stark reality.

Unsuspecting commuters were patiently awaiting buses to ferry them to their different destinations, pedestrians taking their walks and hawkers busy with

their wares at the Emenike Junction Mile 1, Diobu Area of the capital city when suddenly all hell was let loose.

An unspecified number of gunmen, suspected be cult members on a revenge mission, arrived at the scene in two Volkswagen buses painted in commercial colours and started shooting indiscriminately.

When they finally

alighted from their vehicles, eye witnesses said the armed men reportedly strode to a pool betting shop and allegedly shot one person dead.

But that was just the beginning of a carnage. For the next 10 minutes, the gunmen were said to have resumed their shooting, this time more ferociously and indiscriminately, literally turning the Emenike junction of

Port-Harcourt into a human slaughter house.

Many people, indeed, fell. A roast meat (suya) seller at the street corner was hit. He was not the only one. A boy selling bedding materials and carpets was also hit by the flying bullets. Another man and a woman also had their lives cut short by the indiscriminate shooting of the suspected cult members.

By the time the dust settled, seven persons lay dead while 10 were injured, among them eight men and two women, according to Mr. Felix Ogbaudu, the state Police Commissioner, who spoke with The Guardian.

Expectedly the shooting caused a stampede, as scores of pedestrians passing by and commuters waiting for buses at the Emenike junction all scampered

for safety while motorists quickly made U-turn abandoning the road for safety.

Amid the pandemonium that ensued, many people who own shops in the area ran helter-skelter for safety. Several other persons who were not so lucky were also felled by stray bullets, among them a policeman.

When The Guardian visited the scene, some

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of the victims were still lying on the street in pools of their own blood.

After the operation, the gunmen abandoned the buses they came in and boarded motorbikes that were already waiting for them. They made their escape through Okaji Street.

When contacted, the Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Felix Ogbaudu, confirmed the incident but told *The Guardian* that the police were already investigating the

motive for the attack. He disclosed that the two Volkswagen commercial buses used by the suspected cult members had been impounded by the police and that one suspect had also been arrested.

According to him, the person arrested by the police claimed he had been abducted by the gunmen along the way.

Ogbaudu said no policeman was killed during the mayhem that forced traders at the busy Mile 1 market to quickly close shops for fear of reprisal attacks.