

Armed Robbery, Killings Unsettle Makurdi

From **Msugh Ityokura**, Makurdi

RESIDENTS of Makurdi, the Benue State capital and other major towns in the state, no longer sleep with both eyes closed, as a result of armed robbery cases in the state.

The police and other security agencies, meanwhile, are seemingly at a loss on how to curtail the menace. Men of the underworld may have exploited this situation to unleash mayhem on innocent members of the public, as they rob and kill their victims unchallenged.

But there is a twist to the development. While some say the killings are due to robbery activities others insist they are the handiwork of assassins settling scores, as the nation inches closer to another general election.

There are perceptions that the state's Commissioner of Police, Adams Audu, who has served almost three years is not doing enough to curtail the excesses of the criminals. His time in office has reportedly recorded the highest number of killings. Efforts to get his reaction were unsuccessful. He neither picked his calls nor replied text messages.

In the early hours of Saturday, July 19, 2014, what was believed to have been a well-planned attack was carried out on Hanti Hotel

in Makurdi. A security guard was gunned down, as the assailants robbed people in the premises, making away with a guest's *Toyota Corolla* car. Ironically, a police station is located about a kilometer away.

Five other robbery incidents reportedly took place the same night, especially at the New Otukpo Road area of the state.

The Guardian witnessed the Saturday night robbery at Hanti Hotel. The Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS) arrived the scene shortly after the incident. Even as the police set about making sense of the bloody footprint the robbers left behind, their communication gadgets kept relaying emergency messages of robbery attacks in other parts of Makurdi.

A staff of the hotel said the robbers jumped over the gate, having failed to gain entry through the rear of the hotel because of barbed wire on the fence. They thereafter shot the guard for denying them access. The slain guard had reportedly served the hotel for eight years with integrity.

The Wadata, North Bank and Kanshio areas are believed to be regular hideouts for men of the underworld in the city.

On the night of July 23, 2014, on Iorkyaa Ako Street, four people were shot dead in an armed robbery operation, less than two kilometers from the state police headquarters.

One Chinedu, owner of a restaurant, and his sales girl were shot, alongside two others, as the robbers sought to identify the owner of a sports utility vehicle parked in the area.

On July 10, a dead body was found along a street in new GRA, Makurdi. A passerby had heard the sound of a phone ringing. Upon drawing nearer, he discovered the sound was emanating from the pocket of a corpse.