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In Ogun, many ritualists, many questions

By Gbenga
Akinfenwa | 17
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Eerie...A den of ritual killers

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- Investigations Are Ongoing, Says Police PRO

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Ogun State is in the news, and for the wrong reason. It appears to be the all time haven for ritualists, two years after Soka, the forest of horror, discovered in Ibadan, Oyo State, attempted to steal the show.

Eight dens have been uncovered in various parts of the state since 2013. The latest was at the Iyana-Ilogbo area near Sango, where police detectives from Sango Divisional Headquarters arrested two middle-aged men for being in possession a corpse and several human parts. A victim, held at an uncompleted filling station used by the culprits, had luckily escaped and alerted people to the gruesome activities going on in the hideout.

Earlier, on February 2, 2013, the police stormed an underground den in Idode-Imomo, Ijebu North-East Local Government Area, and arrested three suspects: Kehinde Rufai, Debo Awonaya and one David. Eyewitnesses said youths uncovered the place after a 70-year-old man, Kehinde Rabi, went missing.

On April 2, 2014, a man identified simply as Gbenga was arrested at Iyana Egbado village in Ewekoro Local Government Area of the state for being in possession of human parts, including intestines stashed in a polythene bag. The suspect had attempted to kill a woman before a passerby rescued her. The arrest further led to the discovery of plastic containers filled with human blood; ladies' undergarments; shoes for men and women; and bloodstained cloths, among others, under a bridge along the Abeokuta-Lagos Expressway.

Barely 24 hours after, on April 3, 2014, residents of Akinremi Estate in the Adigbe area of Obafemi-Owode Local Government Area discovered yet another den. Furious youths immediately set the building ablaze. The discovery was grisly unique,

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as the criminals bred babies for ritual purposes. A search of the place revealed an ivory bowl containing fresh blood; coffin; effigies; scorpion; and assorted charms. Also found were an international e-passport and identity cards of junior and senior secondary school students of Sacred Heart Catholic College, Oke-Ilewo, who may have been killed by the kidnappers.

On June 9, 2014, a den was discovered at Olugbode Community, along Lafenwa-Itele Road in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Council. An unidentified young boy who went missing while hawking on Alhaji Jamiu Sulaimon Street was rescued.

Again, on June 21, 2014, police operatives from Ajuwon Divisional Headquarters sealed a building in the Lambe area of Akute-Ajuwon, Ifo Local Government Area, allegedly used by armed robbers and kidnappers.

On May 7, 2015, the police uncovered a den at Unity and Peace Estate, along Itele-Lafenwa Road, Ota, Ado Odo-Ota Local Government Area, following escape by a 28-year-old lady, held in an uncompleted building in the estate.

On June 19, 2015, police operatives attached to Ishara division stormed another den at Orile Eleposo, Ode-Remo area in Remo North Local Government Area. The discovery followed the case of a missing student of Gateway Polytechnic, Sapade in Ogun State, Miss Morenikeji Owolabi. The lady, however, had already been killed by her abductors, led by one Femi Macaulay.

All the discoveries and arrests, notwithstanding, the affected communities and relatives of the victims are not pleased with the disposition of the police on the cases. They claimed that after the usual words, “the command has started an investigation into the matter,” nothing is heard again.

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Residents of Itele, who raised the alarm that led to the rescue of a young hawk, are worried that after almost two years, the whereabouts of the boy and the fate of the suspects are unknown. Also, in Iyana-Egbado, in Ewekoro Local Council Area, where another suspect was nabbed, people say they are in the dark as to whether the man has been released or charged to court.

But the State Police Public Relations Officer, Muiyiwa Adejobi, described the allegations as untrue. He claimed that the suspects are always charged to court, adding that the duty of the police stops at arraignment and prosecution.

“Police cannot determine the cause of death. There are some things that are beyond the powers of the police. Like in the case of Iyana-Ilogbo, what we are doing is carrying out the autopsy on the corpse, to know the primary and secondary cause. We can then add the circumstantial evidence we have and prosecute. It is the pathologists’ or any other experts’ outcome that we would use to file our report.

“There are some things that we cannot decide at the police level because we would need expert opinion. So, people should be patient. Investigation is not like a film that you’ll start seeing, and in the next one or two and a half hours, it is finished. No, investigation takes time; it is not a movie. They should just be patient, and I am sure we are going to do the right thing.”

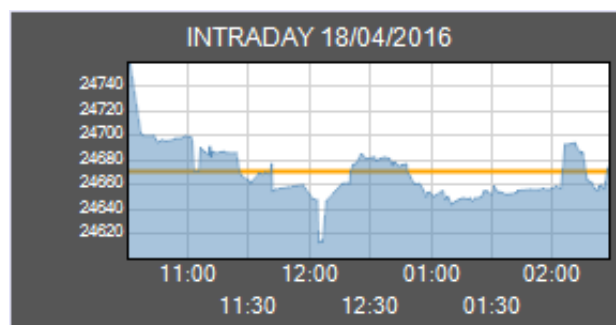
He confirmed that the owner of the uncompleted filling station at Iyana-Ilogbo and two others, are already in custody, and that investigation is going on.

But why the rise in these heinous acts and why are communities unable to forestall them?

The traditional ruler of Lisa town, Chief Najeem

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Oladele Odugbemi, blamed inability by community leaders to closely monitor the activities of people in their domains.

“As a community leader, you must know your people. We discovered such in my community some time ago, but we quickly went there, dismantled the place and involved the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, who sealed the place. After this, we dislodged the culprits from our community. Community leaders must also ensure they work in synergy with recognised security agencies, so that anybody engaging in such dastardly acts is apprehended.”

Odugbemi attributed the upsurge in kidnapping to drive for quick money. “Many who were not born with the proverbial silver spoon struggled to make it in life without involvement in money-making rituals. Now, everybody wants to ride good cars after leaving school. Everybody wants to build mansions, and not modest houses.

“There is so much ill in the society. We operate within the same system with the police. Some of the suspects have godfathers who ensure they are released after arrest. Those buying body parts from the suspects are big men who are into money-making rituals, especially politicians who want to remain in power at all costs.”

The Public Relations Officer (PRO), Vigilante Service of Ogun State (VSO), Mr. Soji Ganzallo, said his men are working assiduously to discover dens across the state. “We are leaving no stones unturned. As a grassroots security outfit, we have tasked our members to be on the look out for these dens,” he said, calling for the establishment of more VSO units and urging government to empower community leaders, because they are closer to the grassroots than politicians.