

TheMetroSection

Guardian Nigeria f Guardian Nigeria 08136370421 GuardianNigeria Guardian Nigeria - C00264288

Cultists go on rampage, kill eight in Benin

From Michael Egbejule (Benin City),
Michael Akinadewo and
Onoharhigho Omovudidi (Lagos)

- Man dies in custody after police insist on N20,000 bail
- Oworo residents want end to incessant gang wars

THE ongoing cult war between the Aye and Eyi confraternities has led to the killing of eight persons in different parts of Benin City, Edo State in the last three days.

Palpable fear has continued to grip residents following another gruesome killing of an undergraduate identified as John Terry by gunmen suspected to be cultists on Monday night during a rival cult clash. Terry was killed along Upper Uwa Street off M.M. Way Benin City.

Sources said he was engaged as polling agent to one of the political parties in the February 16th botched general elections. According to eyewitnesses, Terry was beaten to death with rods and sticks by his assailants.

A father of four simply identified as Africa was yesterday morning hacked to death at Aifuwa Junction after shots fired at him did not penetrate his body. His body was dumped at the Central Hospital mortuary.

At Three House area, Upper Sokponba in Ikpoba-Okha local government area, traders and shop owners scampered for safety as suspected cultists robbed passers-by and shot into the air. Two boys belonging to rival cult group were shot dead.

A pharmaceutical shop owner who pleaded for anonymity said over 20 persons ran into his shop when the shooting started and they laid on the floor to avoid being hit by stray bullets,



lets, adding that traders around the area now close their shops from 7:30p.m. since Sunday.

"I was inside my shop when I received a call that I should lock it and go home because the area was about to scatter. As I stood up to tell my boys to lock up, I saw people running into my store to take refuge. All of us were on the floor while the shootings were on. We later heard many people were robbed while two boys were killed."

Another witness said police men later stormed the area and started arresting innocent persons. On Sunday night, the manager of the hotel owned by Osaze Odemwingle, Osato Okunkpolor, was killed by cultists who engaged in a shootout.

In December last year, Governor Godwin Obaseki had unveiled a security architecture in the state, known as "Opera-

tion Wabaizigan" (Stop All Bad Things) with brand new 30 Hilux vans, 50 patrol vehicles equipped with communications gadgets, two APC vehicles and motorcycles.

The Edo State police spokesman, DSP Chidi Nwabuzor, said the police have set up security measures to make sure the city is safe and well protected. He urged residents in the state to be patient as the focus was on the general election.

A security source said the renewed killings since last Saturday was linked to the money released by political parties for the now postponed general elections.

Meanwhile, a 45-year-old man, Osifo Okeguare, has reportedly died in police cell at the Ekpoma Divisional Police headquarters in Esan West local government areas. It was gathered the police detained him after his family could not raise the N20,000 demanded

to release him on bail.

An activist, Mr. Kola Edokpayi, alleged that the family raised N15,000 but the IPO in charge of case insisted on keeping the deceased.

But spokesman for the police in the state, DSP Nwabuzor, said the late Osifo and one Richard Femi, on February 10, were arrested while attempting to steal a motorcycle where it was parked.

Nwabuzor said Osifo took ill while in police cell and was taken to the Eremosele hospital in Ekpoma for treatment where he later died, adding that his body had been deposited at the Irukepken General hospital for autopsy examination.

He appealed to members of the family to remain calm and law abiding until the autopsy examination is made released.

In another development, residents of Oworoshoki area

of Lagos State have lamented the incessant gang wars in the area. The therefore called on security agencies to nip the activities of cultists who boldly operate without fear in the bud.

Some concerned residents took their plea to the social media where they called on both the federal and state government to stop the cult wars.

According to a lady identified as @sisimi_16, she said: "Cultists in the area operate with no fear and what they do is to break glasses of cars park on the street, fight and kill themselves while police officers have been unable to do anything to check the situation."

Some hotspots are Ayo Odugbesan, Church, Oke-Eri, Odo-Eran and Aralamo streets. "We are not safe in Oworo. These cultists are making life unbearable for us. We need help in this area."