

12 killed in Edo cult violence

By Michael Egbejule, Benin City

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• Police Area Commander, Others Shot

At least seven suspected cult members were feared killed yesterday during renewed cult violence in parts of Benin City, the Edo State capital.

This brings the number of lives lost in cult-related clashes in the state capital that started on Wednesday to 12.

An Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) in charge of the Area Command and two other senior police officers were also shot in the early hours of the day at the popular Murtala Muhammed Way, close to Third East Circular road junction, near Sakponba road in the capital city.

It was gathered that soldiers had been deployed to the troubled areas of Upper Sakponba, Idogbo, Three House Junction, and adjoining locations where activities of the cultists have sent residents fleeing for their lives.

The ACP (names withheld) was said to be receiving treatment at an undisclosed hospital.

There were killings in separate locations in the city on Wednesday and Thursday by rival cult groups, with four persons killed in Isihor quarters, near the Ugbowo Campus of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) in Ovia North East Council on Thursday.

At Upper Sakponba axis in Ikpoba-Okha Council, one person was reportedly killed on Thursday morning, while two other persons were also killed in Ogida Quarters in Egor Council on Wednesday and two in New Benin, by Constain junction during a gun duel between rival cult groups.

Two were killed at Erediauwa axis and Satana market on Benin-Ore-Sapele road yesterday.

The cause of the fracas between the warring cult groups could not be ascertained at press time, but the situation has left residents scampering for safety in the affected areas.

One of the victims of the killings in Isihor quarters, whose identity could not be ascertained, was said to be operating a barbing saloon in the area until his death.

The killings across parts of the state capital led to the early closure of businesses, as vehicular and human activities were halted.

The state Police Command's spokesman, Chidi Nwabuzor, who confirmed the incident, disclosed that the senior officer is an Area Commander, but did not give his name, adding that the gunmen shot him while he was responding to a distress call.

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