

'Why Imo Anglican priest was murdered'

MASSOB decries long keeping of bodies in mortuaries in Igboland

From Lawrence Njoku (Enugu) and Collins Osuji (Owerri)

REVELATIONS have emerged over possible reason behind the gruesome murder of a priest of the Anglican Church, Mr. Emeka Merenu, by suspected assailants in Iheteukwa, Orsu Local Council of Imo State last Monday.

Merenu, until his death, was priest in-charge of St Andrew's Anglican Church and Principal of Trinity Secondary School, both in Orsu-Iheteukwa.

A member of the church, who pleaded anonymity, told *The Guardian* in an exclusive interview, yesterday, that the slain cleric had on the fateful day assisted the supervisors and examiners sent to his school for the English Language examination, "but midway into the examination, soldiers from nowhere barricaded the school to the shock and surprise of the priest and all people around."

The source stated: "The soldiers never revealed to either the Principal (slain priest) or anybody who drafted them to the school for any security purpose.

"Thereafter, we learnt that the soldiers, after leaving the school at the end of the examination, were said to have killed three youths in the community who were suspected to be members of the dreaded Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and behind the sit-at-home order in the state."

"So, we believe that the gang that killed Rev. Merenu may have got enraged with the killing of three of their members, hence they invaded the priest's residence the next day, which was Tuesday, around 8.30 a.m.

"On arrival, they accused him of bringing in soldiers who kill their members but the priest denied the allegation and even swore with his life on it.

"But they were bent on killing him even after he had pleaded with them to spare his life but should take all his belongings, including his car. They eventually shot him at close range several times.

"They initially dispossessed him, his wife, mother-in-law and everyone in his house of all their communication gadgets, collected his car key and drove it out from the parking lot".

"They also burnt his car and as well went inside his room, took his cassock with other priest vestments and set them ablaze on top of his bed before leaving the premises.

"If not for the loud cries from the deceased's household, which attracted courageous villagers, the entire building would have been burnt down and his family members therein roasted alive because those people locked everybody inside the room before they left," the source further revealed.

MEANWHILE, the leadership of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), yesterday, expressed worries over keeping of corpses for too long in mortuaries in Igboland.

It alleged that several spirits of unburied persons are now hovering over Igboland and possessing young men and women into immoral and criminal activities.

In a statement signed by its leader, Uchenna Madu, the group said that it would embark on consultation with critical Igbo stakeholders, including traditional, religious, political and opinion leaders, with a view to curtailing the development in the interest of Ndigbo.

MASSOB, which added that the trend was disturbing and turning into a societal menace, said that it was untraditional to keep dead members of one's family more than two