

# Five die In A'lbom cult war as police take over Uyo city centre

From Ayoyinka Jegede, Uyo

**F**IVE persons were reported killed and others critically injured in rival cult clashes, involving two notorious confraternities - Vikings and the Mafians, Tuesday evening, close to Government House/ Governor's lodge, Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital. Eyewitnesses close to Ibom Plaza, Government house axis of the city centre, told *The Guardian* that the fracas started during evening hours, at about 6:30 p.m., and lasted for about two hours, before Police operatives and a detachment of soldiers standing guard at the plaza since the #End-SARS protests last year, arrived to restore normalcy. A tricycle operator, Aniekan Akpainyang, who spoke to newsmen, linked the remote cause of the violence to a minor disagreement at a betting shop, along Ikot Ekpene road by the plaza area. He said the incident triggered the old animosity

between the rival groups.

He said: "One cultist, a member of the Vikings Confraternity, had placed a bet to the tune of N5,000, but could not pay, after he lost. The shop attendant asked him to pay or drop his phone, but he refused, instead, he called his gang members on the phone, who came, pounced on the attendant and raided the shop.

"The resultant reprisal from the camp of the booking man, said to belong to the Mafians group, led to a free-for-all, resulting to the death of three persons; two at the Plaza area and one at the Ikpa road junction, close to University of Uyo (UNI-UYO) town campus, while two others, had earlier been killed at Okokon Etuk street, few metres to Uyo City centre.

**M**EANWHILE, spokesperson for the state's Police Command, Superintendent of Police (SP), Odiko Macdon, in a

statement, yesterday, confirmed the incident, but could not give the casualty figures.

He said: "On Tuesday, at about 6:30pm, the Command received information about a cult clash at the Plaza.

"While the Commissioner of Police (CP), Olatoye Durosinmi, condemned the unfortunate incident, which caused palpable fear among the good people of the state, the CP has reminded those involved in this dastardly act to note that the ban on cultism in the state is still in force and henceforth, perpetrators of such acts will be apprehended and prosecuted in accordance with extant laws.

"The CP therefore, called on residents to go about their lawful duties without fear of molestation as the Command has put in place adequate security at the Plaza and around the state, throughout the Yuletide and beyond."