

# Catholic Priest Assassinated In Abakiliki

By Felix Uka  
REPORTER, Abakiliki

Reminiscent of the 1929 Aba Women Riot, the assassination of a Catholic Church Priest in Afikpo, Ebonyi State on Tuesday, sparked off protests, with more than 10,000 women marching through the streets of Afikpo, cursing perpetrators of the act and those behind them.

The menfolk, in a similar protest, convoked a meeting of stakeholders, placing a ban on cultism in the town that they said had before 1904, harboured Missionaries.

**INEC To Begin**

The murdered priest, Rev. father Francis Chidi Okoye, who was from Anambra State, was said to have been hacked to death by the killers in his bedroom at his Saint Mary's Catholic Parish.

The protest by the women stalled activities leading to the closure of the major Eke Market a development that the spokesperson of the women; Mrs. Felicia Egwu, said had never happened since the market was opened.

They marched through the market to the Divisional Police Office in the community, each of them carrying green leaves and traditional walking sticks that

they hit on the ground as they cursed the killers.

At the police station, they met the Police Area Commander, Oga Ero, and the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Alphonsus Duru, who told them that the matter was being investigated.

Mrs. Egwu, the spokesperson told the police that as mothers, they were too pained by the gruesome murder of the priest who, they said, had been good counsellors and had brought about the repentance of many people.

She asked the police to bring the killers to book, not leaving

behind those who might have hired them to prosecute the act.

When contacted, the Public Relations Officer of the Ebonyi State Police Command, Mr. Godwin Wekwa (ASP), told Daily Independent that four suspects had been arrested in connection with the murder.

He, however, said that those arrested had not volunteered information that could lead to arrest of the killers.

Wekwa explained the case did could not be described as an assassination per se, because, according to him, the killers stole certain items, say-

ing, "anyway, the case is still being investigated."

Wekwa, however, pointed out that, "the late priest was seen as a radical priest who was even more vocal than the senior priest in the parish because, in his own words, he preached against evil acts in the area, so, we are looking at it to ascertain if it was hired assassination or armed robbery."

"The real suspects have not been identified, we need to have people volunteer information that can lead to their arrest", he added.