

Killers On The Rampage In Yenagoa

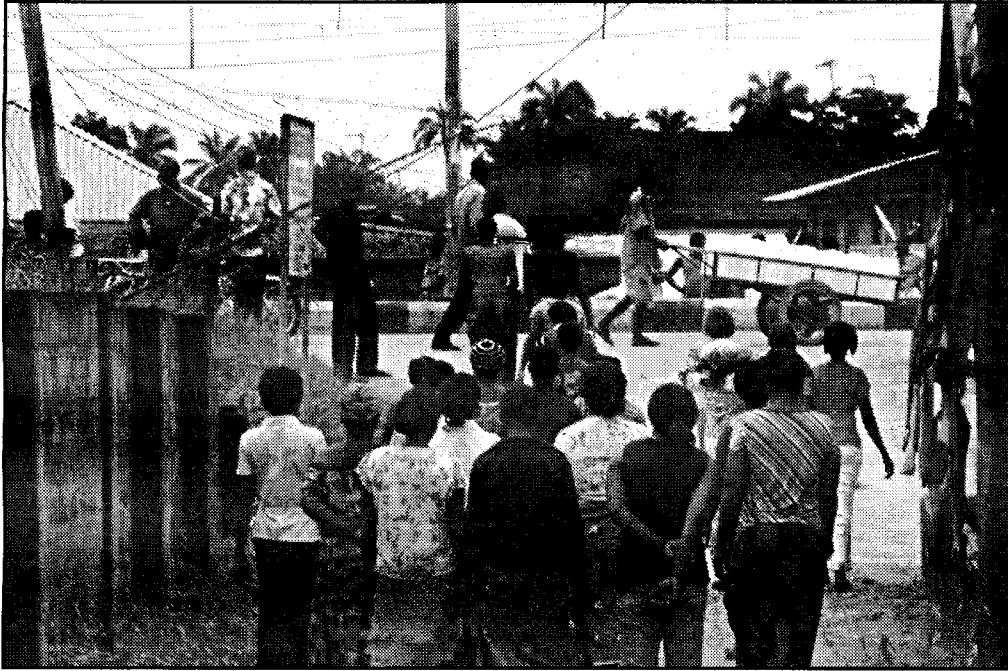
By Emma Gbemudu
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT,
Yenagoa

Inhabitants of Opolo-Epie a community in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, are still gripped with tension and fear over a gruesome murder of an unidentified lady last Friday night August 8, 2008. They are still querying who are behind the crime. The about 35-year-old lady was believed to be gang-raped by some unidentified persons, who inflicted serious injuries on the deceased face before she gave up the ghost.

Snuffing life out of the fair-complexion lady could be described as sad and unfortunate. Residents are yet to recover from the shock of the untimely death of the lady. They have since started exercising caution on their movements, especially at nights.

Residents said the lady's death might not be unconnected with the activities of ritualists, who are desperate to amass wealth by cutting corners. These shady-minded and diabolic individuals want to get rich quickly without working hard. Inhabitants of Yenagoa, who are fond of hanging out in drinking joints and hotels, are beginning to entertain fear over their safety.

Nightlife in the city is interesting despite the rising rate of robbery activities



• Residents watch as the body is being taken away

among some youths who operate with motorcycles. This necessitated the banning of bike operators popularly called 'okada' by the state government. For some time now, the security situation in the state capital is becoming porous occasioned by the rising crime rates coupled with many inaccessible roads that litter Yenagoa. Most times, police patrol vehicles find it difficult to gain access to the deplorable roads begging for construction.

Investigations by *Daily Independent* revealed that the unlucky lady might have been deceived by her

assailants to a secluded spot in a palm plantation. Human traffic around the area is usually low at night. When our correspondent visited the scene of the misfortune on Saturday morning, sympathisers were seen catching a glimpse of the lifeless and naked body of the deceased lying in the pool of her blood. Her body was deposited inside one of the uncompleted buildings by her murderers.

Twenty metres away from where the body was lying showed some used tissue papers, condoms, pieces of cloth, lady's pant, purse and block with bloodstains on the

ground. The women, who gathered at the scene, shed tears and cursed the perpetrators of the crime. After taking life out of her, the lady's face was turned faced down. Reports indicated that the body was deposited in the uncompleted building shortly after she was murdered to beat the prying eyes of passers-by.

There were indications that the lady might have engaged in a battle with her attackers, who eventually overpowered her. Some sympathizers, who are living close to the scene, said the block might have been used

to hit the lady on her face and body thereby making it difficult to recognise her. It was not ascertained if any part of her lifeless body was removed by her killers.

Residents on that Saturday morning immediately alerted the police, who arrived the area in a private car to pick the body of the lady. Majority of the people living close to the scene of the incident are worried that the police are yet to track down the offenders. The suspects are still working freely on the streets of Yenagoa. No arrest has been made, even as the police's investigation is ongoing.

A rights activist and representative of the Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Bayelsa State, Alagoo Morris, described the lady's death as very disturbing and inhuman. "This is man's inhumanity to man. The police should rise up to the occasion and investigate properly to enable them arrest and prosecute the offenders to serve as a deterrent to others," he said.

A civil servant and resident of Opolo-Epie, who pleaded anonymity, urged security agencies and the state government not to sweep the matter under the carpet. He said the criminals are callous and heartless to have engaged in that act. He recalled the gruesome killing of a Permanent Secretary in the state, Dr. Ikpabari Apiri, who was murdered over a month ago by unknown gunmen in

his community, Okodi, Ogbia Local Government. He said residents are now living in fear over the incident.

The rising wave of assassination in Yenagoa is generating tension in the once peaceful city. Only last month, an accounts officer, Austin Ogbobio, attached to the Accounts Department of the Government House was murdered in cold blood. Eyewitness accounts said the late Ogbobio, a father of two children, had gone to inspect his new building along Yenezuegene to pay artisans working there during which he was accosted by two gunmen on a motorcycle. They shot him at a close range and disappeared.

When contacted, Police Public Relations Officer, Ibokette Iniobong (DSP), claimed not to be aware of the incident. He promised to confer with his colleagues to get the details of the incident.

Checking the spate of killings by some undesirable elements is a major challenge before the state government and security agencies in the state, as some persons killing innocent people are currently having a field day in the state. Sponsors of these killers should be unmasked and made to face the music. This was the view of a Yenagoa-based legal practitioner, while some concerned citizens are planning a protest march against assassinations in the state.