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BENIN

Benin Cult War Claims 15

The protracted cult war in Benin City and environs took a new dimension in the last 48 hours as rival cult groups turned the Upper Sakponba area of the ancient city into a theatre of war where reprisal attacks have claimed more than 15 persons, according to police sources.

In one of the attacks, a man

simply identified as Africa was said to have been gunned down in the early hours of Tuesday at his beer parlour, located at Uviosa Junction, Upper Sakponba.

It was gathered that his assailants dragged him out of his beer parlour and shot him several times.

But when they discovered that bullets could not penetrate him, they allegedly used machetes on him.

The lifeless body of the victim was sighted inside a police van which deposited his corpse at the Benin Specialist Hospital.

Not long after that two other bodies were said to have been taken by police operatives to the same hospital mortuary.

Reports had it that the two victims, whose identities could not be ascertained, were also killed at the Upper

Sakponba area of the city. A young man, who was identified as John Terry, was allegedly killed at Upper Uwa area, between 2nd and 3rd East Circular roads of the city.

It was gathered that unidentified assailants attacked and smashed the head of the victim with a stone.

It would be recalled that a hotel manager, Okunkpolo Osatohamwen, was also murdered at his place of work by

yet to be identified assailants in the early hours of Monday at the same Upper Sakponba area.

It was not clear which cult groups were involved in the unending attacks.

When contacted on phone, the Edo State Commissioner of Police, Hakeem Odumosu, said he was in Kano on election duty.

The state Police Command Spokesman, Chidi Nwabuzor, could also not be reached for confirmation, as calls made to

his mobile phone went unanswered.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State chapter, has condemned the cult-related killings in Benin.

A statement by the Council Chairman and Secretary, Sir Roland Osakue, and Titus Akhigbe, respectively, described the development as "unwarranted killings of youths in Benin City, particularly Upper Sakponba axis".