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One dies in Anambra masqueraders' bloody outing

Posted by: Odogwu Emeka Odogwu, Nnewi in News 7 hours ago

•60 injured, 10 churches burnt

One person was killed and over 60 people injured on Monday when some masqueraders and their youth guides attacked Christians in Oba-Ofemmili community, Awka-North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Eyewitnesses said 10 churches were burnt. More attacks may come today.

Some of the churches attacked are Assemblies of God Church, Grace of God, Deeper Life Bible Church, Winners Church, Christ Holy Church, St. Paul's Catholic Church, Odozi Obodo and the Vicarage of St Paul's Anglican Church, Awba Ofemmili.

Police spokesman Emeka Chukwuemeka said he was not aware of the incident and promised to get back to our reporter.

The priest of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Rev Pat Odinanwa, confirmed the threat of more attacks on Christians.

He accused the policemen at Ugbene community of not coming to the aid of the hapless Christians when the troubled started.

"The police were informed but they did not come. I think those boys are their regular customers."

Odinanwa said all his efforts to calm the youths failed.

The priest said there were agreements between the church and the community, yet the community was seeking to stop Christians from worshipping.

Odinanwa said: "There was a document signed between the traditional ruler and the Christians which states that the masqueraders should start by 9pm and no woman should be seen on the road at that time. And we all agreed.

"But a town crier announced another thing saying anybody going for a church programme should leave home by 5pm, which was contrary to the agreement.

"Most of the women who attended the programme were harassed and ordered to go back. Those who left by 6pm were able to get to the church before it was late."

The priest said he cancelled the programme and told the congregation to sleep in the church.

"But the youths stormed the church and razed the vicarage, shooting people and inflicting machete pains on them."

A victim, Sunday Aliuba, said they were in the church when the miscreants stormed the place.

Aliuba said: "The community and the Christians had an agreement that the night masqueraders will not start until 9pm and we were having our programmes according to the rules.

"But on Monday, there was a rumour that the pagans will be burning churches. Around 11pm, they started shooting.

"Around 1am, they stormed the church and razed the vicarage.

"We hid under the staircase and within the pews. In selfdefence, we pounced on one of them. But when it became intense, my colleagues ran away.

"I also ran but they pursued me and shot me in the legs, shattering my ankles and bones.

"They also inflicted machete cuts on me. The blood that came out of my body can fill two buckets. It was God who saved me."

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A community leader and former supervisory councillor for health in Awka North, Ignatius Okafor, condemned the incident.

Okafor said: "One person died from gunshot injuries. These people committed arson and we have never seen such hatred between brothers.

He confirmed that there was an agreement that church activities would not be disrupted.

"It was agreed that masqueraders should start by 9pm but this incident started by 5pm. So it was premeditated."

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