



•Heavy duty vehicle loading at Kokori market

It is obvious that most of us would even find it difficult to come to the community to celebrate this Christmas; it is very funny and sad. We know with the help of the vigilance group and the security agents, we will overcome this situation. All our people are on exile for the fear of attack and nothing is happening as we have even cried out severally about our predicaments. We are calling on the Federal Government to come to our rescue before it is too late

No incident highlights the prevailing fear in the town as the killing of one of the highest ranking chiefs in the community by yet unknown gunmen. Chief Josiah Orhorhoro, the Orhosuen (traditional Prime Minister) of the clan, was gunned down in his bedroom and dragged to his courtyard at about 8am on Sunday December 7. Reports that could not be independently verified indicated that he might have had a brush with members of the local crime lords who have seized the town before his unfortunate end.

One of the leaders of the community, who did not want his name mentioned in this report, said the incident indicated that peace had not fully returned to Kokori community. He said the threat to lives and killings by suspected hoodlums is a pointer to the fact there is still much terror and fear in the land.

"Half of the chiefs in Kokori who decide what happen and those at the helms of affairs have fled the community for fear of attack. We have seen that they (hoodlums) want to make us dormant and since we refuse to be silenced, they are out to take lives they cannot create."

Investigation further revealed that the killing of the Orhosuen sent shivers down the spines of the community leaders because of threats earlier made by members of Kelvin's group to decimate the community's leaders who refused to back Kelvin over his ongoing trial in Abuja. It would be recalled that some of the community's leaders and chiefs were forced to embark on a protest march in

Abuja at the initial stage of his unending felony trial. It was gathered that those who refused were marked for ill-treatment by the hoodlums.

A source said one of the deceased's sons, who might be connected to the gang, was fingered for his killing. It was learnt that the killing was linked to the young man after it was revealed that he made a deliberate attempt to cover up where his father was killed.

The usually reliable source said: "The young man tried to clean the blood trail from the deceased's bedroom to the backyard. It means he wanted the public to think that his father was shot outside and not inside his house. Besides, although it was learnt that the killing took place around 8am, he did not raise alarm till about 11am - three hours later - even though he had called some persons in Lagos to tell them about the killing. So, we are thinking that the boy probably killed the man to inherit his property, or for whatever other reason that can only be determined by the police and the court."

Report that the alleged killer has been arrested by Delta State Police Command could not be independent confirmed. Police spokesperson in the Command, DSP Celestina Kalu, said she was in a workshop

when our reporter called her on telephone.

Meanwhile, the fear and tension in the town have necessitated calls for the deployment of more security agents to the area until total peace and normalcy returned to the troubled community. The Secretary of the Kokori Progress Union, Dr. Festus Arunayi, supported the call. "The hoodlums don't only make empty threats; they usually go ahead to accomplish them", he said.

"It is obvious that most of us would even find it difficult to come to the community to celebrate this Christmas; it is very funny and sad. We know with the help of the vigilance group and the security agents, we will overcome this situation. All our people are on exile for the fear of attack and nothing is happening as we have even cried out severally about our predicaments. We are calling on the federal government to come to our rescue before it is too late."

But for the Chairman of the Kokori Community Development Committee (CDC), Comrade Emmanuel Diodemise, the outlook is bright. He said in spite of the prevailing situation, Kokori community is relatively more peaceful than December 2013. "As at last year, we cannot go to the

market or even open our shops for business. But now, there is relative peace probably because of the vigilance group that has been inaugurated about three weeks ago with the approval of the local government council chairman and the army chief. A lot of our people are still taking refuge outside the community. They left the community at the heat of the problem and till date, many of them have not returned, probably waiting till when their house rents expire or till there is total peace in the community.

"I stand to be corrected that those that have not returned are fewer. We are still talking to them to come back and we know in a short while, they will all return. One other thing that may have militated against their coming could be traced to other development of threats and invasion of the community by the hoodlums on the residents."

Despite the CDC chairman's enthusiasm, our finding revealed that palpable fear persists in the town and the situation was not helped by the high profile abduction of a traditional ruler from Bayelsa State, Pere Ekere, Augustine Ebikeme, paramount ruler of Oporomor clan in Ekeremor Local Government Area of the state. The monarch, who was said to be a regular visitor to the community before the incident, was abducted in November. It took the joint intervention of youths, local vigilance and security operatives to free the monarch. But before his release, security operatives had imposed a curfew on the town and shut down the market.

Residents of the town said the recent fate of the monarch as well as the ubiquitous presence of security operatives and attendant harassments scare away visitors from the town. Our reporter, who visited the town, was required to raise his hands while entering the town through the Isiokolo entrance.

Our source told our reporter was luckier when compared to what prevailed in the dark days when the soldiers were lords. "It was difficult for them to differentiate between man, woman and young girl and boy, they treated all equally. They flogged, manhandled everybody they saw without giving concern to age, but today they can see and know who is a young man and who is an old man.

"One other thing we still suffer in the hands of the soldiers is the process of passing through their check points, where everybody is mandated to raise his or her hands up. For some visitors, it is the height of humiliation. This also affects those we invite for ceremonies in Kokori. They often tell you they will not honour your invitation mainly because the raising of hands; they see it as total humiliation."