

One killed as manhunt is launched for Delta council chair

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One person was feared dead yesterday in the aftermath of last Friday's attack on the Shoprite complex at Effurun in Delta State.

Residents of the town and its neighbouring communities in Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State have since been living in fear.

Effurun, Ekpan and Ugborikoko residents were jolted yesterday when guns were fired near Jakpa, Orumaro and Ekpan areas of the troubled town.

The lone casualty was feared killed on PTI Road yesterday when armed youths invaded the area.

The development followed the launch of a manhunt for the embattled Chairman of Uvwie local government area, Henry Baro, who the police accused of prompting the attack.

Trouble started Friday morning when a fracas involving the council chief and a naval rating, led to the invasion of the mall by dozens of weapon-wielding youths, purportedly on Baro's behest.

A police source claimed that a closed circuit television (CCTV) on the scene showed Baro in the thick of the action.

"He ordered the youths," a source said.

But Baro denied the allegation, claiming he was a victim of a drunken naval rating who beat him up.

The police said the council chairman failed to honour their invitation, prompting a siege to his Jakpa Road home from Friday night till Saturday evening.

Eyewitness said about 100 heavily armed mobile policemen in over 20 vans invaded Baro's home on Saturday evening.

It was learnt that Baro had fled before the policemen arrived at his home.

But as the police were manning the gates to the council chairman's home, armed youths were unleashing mayhem on motorists and passengers at Jakpa and other parts of Effurun.

A police source told our reporter that Baro was believed to have fled to Lagos or nearby Edo State.

It was learnt that an initial appraisal of the security arrangement at the popular mall blamed the ease with which hoodlums overran the city on porous security lapses.

"We have reviewed the video from the CCTV and I can tell you that there is a strong need for urgent review of security at the mall," a top police officer told our correspondent yesterday.

The source, who pleaded not to be named, blamed the management of the mall for the deplorable security situation.

He noted that the security lapses at the mall made it easy for hoodlums to loot shops and cart away mobile handsets, laptops, cash and other valuables.

"The incident at a shopping mall in Kenya last year should serve as an eye-opener. People cannot just set up businesses without consideration for the security and safety of their clients and customers.

The source added: "After a review of the CCTV, we discovered that the youths, numbering over 200, gained unrestricted access to the premises. The security operatives on the ground were few and some of them were not armed.

"The private security on the premises appeared untrained on how to deal with such a situation. That is unacceptable, in view of the bombing and other incidents in the country and beyond. You see that vehicles come and go without scrutiny of their boots. They have kiosks for such exercise but nobody is manning them.

"From what we found out, if the boys had targeted shoppers instead of the goods they went to steal, it would have been a different story."

the casualty would have been high. This is because they just had a field day.”

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