

Uneasy calm in Lagos community

Grisly crimes have taken over Ikorodu, a Lagos suburb, in recent times, as security operatives and local vigilance groups battle to protect residents' lives and property.
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IKORODU, a Lagos suburb once reputed for peace and tranquility, is virtually turning into a nest of criminal gangs. The peace that once governed the ancient community is being forced into exile by suspected armed robbers, hired assassins, kidnappers, cult gangs, land grabbers and rapists, among other anti-social elements.

In March this year, the quiet atmosphere at the Babington Macauley Junior Seminary School in Ikorodu was violated by gunmen who stormed the premises of the missionary school and abducted three female students. The hapless schoolgirls were in captivity for six days before they were rescued at Imota on the outskirts of Ikorodu.

A few days ago, pipeline vandals terrorised residents of Imushin, Elepete, Oke Muti, Bolorunduro, Igbo Olomu and Ajegunle areas of Ikorodu North Local Council Development Area, killing no fewer than 20 people. The attack came barely one week after the vandals killed about 15 people in retaliation for two of their members killed by operatives of the Special Anti Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigeria Police Force during a raid on their hotel hide-out.

On September 16 last year, no fewer than seven operatives of the Department of State Service (DSS) were killed during an encounter with pipeline vandals in Ishawo area of the community. The incident, which occurred at about 8 pm, was the second time in two weeks that vandals would unleash terror on security operatives.

It will be recalled that four policemen attached to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad and Owutu Police Division on August 30, 2015, were also attacked by the suspected vandals.

Cultist gangs on the loose

Violent clashes between members of rival cult groups, particularly those of Eiye and Aiye confraternities, have also rocked the community. The perennial confrontations and reprisal killings by the cult groups embroiled in supremacy battles are posing serious threats to law and order. The cult-related killings have assumed more frightening dimensions in recent times as armed youths engage one another in shootouts in broad daylight. A number of other youths have been maimed or mugged at parties and the market place, resulting in palpable fear among residents.



•Some militants

On January 13, no fewer than five persons were killed while five others were injured in a clash of rival cult groups. The fight between the Aye and Eiye confraternities was said to have started around 1 am during the Itumeko Street carnival. The fight reportedly broke out after the Eiye cult group killed two Aye (Black Axe) members who were invited to the carnival. They were said to have been killed on their way home.

The injured ones were transferred to the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) and Ikorodu General Hospital.

Rampaging gunmen also hacked a man to death on Jaladugbo Street of the town on March 7. The deceased, popularly called Sunshine, was reportedly hacked to death by some cultists who shot sporadically before they escaped on a motorcycle.

Again, a 32-year-old surveyor identified simply as Adekunle and five others were shot dead in a hotel in Ikorodu on July 6 last year when suspected Eiye and Aiye confraternity members engaged in a shootout in a hotel in Itumojia and Allison areas of the community.

Land grabbers in free reign

Dare devil land grabbers have also spread fear among residents of Igbo-kuta, Ishawo, Imowo Nla, Imowo kekere, Isiu and Igbo-gbo areas of Ikorodu town. On April 1, this year, suspected land grabbers opened fire on aggrieved residents of Isiu community in an attempt to forcibly take over their farmlands, leading to the death of an unidentified man.

“My business has been adversely affected because people no longer come out once they return from work to avoid being attacked. A number of shop owners have relocated from this community because of incessant attacks by marauding cult members. I have also made up my mind to relocate in the next few weeks because I don't want to fall victim too

Two weeks later, a father of three, Saheed Agbade, was also killed in the Ire-Agunfoye area of Igbo-gbo, Ikorodu, during an ambush by suspected land grabbers. A young man named Yinka Olatunji was said to have been severely injured after some people described as land grabbers stormed Imowonla and attacked residents with matchetes and guns.

An Imowonla indigene, Mr Olusegun Ajayi, who blamed the police for being ineffective, reportedly said: “I woke up around 6 am and heard strange noise and gunshots. I had wanted to use the toilet, but I had to run back immediately for my life. They spoil our things, fired shots to scare women, came into our houses and flung away our things.”

“We can't even stay in the house for fear of being killed. We want the government to come to our rescue. We wonder how police officers would connive with land grabbers when Governor Akinwunmi Ambode has given an order that there should not be anything of such.”

Although a few arrests were made by the police shortly after the incidents, their prosecution, according to residents, has not seen the light of day.

Behind the crisis

The violent clashes between the vicious gangs mostly occur in notable areas of Ikorodu, including Igbo-gbo, Odogunyan, Agbade, Odo Nla, Ita Oluwo, First and Second Gates, Odo Kekere, Ladega, Transformer and parts of Ogijo. The location of the Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH) to the residential area has also contributed to the escalation of clashes between contend-