

# Tension over renewed cult clashes in Kogi



by **Arogbonlo Israel** June 27, 2019

•Security vehicles stationed at the Faculty of Social Sciences



***Cult clashes among students of some higher institutions in Kogi State have resurged, heightening tension in their host communities. Although calm has since been restored, social and economic life remains under threat. AROGBONLO ISRAEL reports.***

There is fear in some communities in Kogi State as no fewer than 10 students have reportedly been killed between January and now in cult clashes.

The development is affecting the economic life of the state, especially in communities, such as Anyigba, Idah and Akpa, that have become most vulnerable in recent times.

The cult clashes, CAMPUSLIFE learnt, occurred a fortnight ago at Anyigba in Dekina Local Government Area of the state, where about seven students were reportedly killed.

Students, traders, businessmen and even public transport operators are counting their losses from the development that is gradually eclipsing the once-booming night life of the communities.

CAMPUSLIFE learnt that the activities of rival cult groups have continued to assume dangerous dimension, as they are now more daring and operate in broad daylight.

Some sources attributed the heightened tension to the presence of tertiary institutions in the areas mentioned. The higher institutions are Kogi State University, Anyigba, Federal Polytechnic, Idah, and

the College of Education, Ankpa.

### **Death, destruction**

A source who pleaded not to be named revealed that the clashes were triggered by two rival cult groups – Eiye confraternity and Aro Bagger confraternity.

The source said the two factions had been in existence for nearly a decade, and are often enmeshed in a war of superiority, leading to deaths across both flanks.

According to the source, the clashes were sparked by the latter group after killing a member of the former. Irked by the action of the other group, the Eiye confraternity was said to have gone on a revenge mission resulting in the death of six more persons. The victims were gunned down at various places in the community, the source added.

Following the incident, fully armed military men were deployed to Anyigba to maintain peace, the source also said.

Last month, a graduate of Sociology of KSU, Olorunmola Emmanuel, was gunned down around the school premises by unidentified hoodlums who removed with their victim's private parts.

### **Students, residents jittery**

"It's obvious the level at which students are being attacked at their various lodges and hostels. I keep asking myself if we have security on this campus. Students can no longer read at their convenience. So, how do you expect us not to perform very low in exams if these killings are not tackled in time?," lamented Aminu Mukthar Adejoh, a 300-Level Political Science undergraduate of UDUS.

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Adejoh's coursemate, Oruma Mankind Abimaje, lamented that the government and school authorities have looked the other way for too long.

He said: "How long would our government continue to watch and encourage the wrong doings of these rascals that would soon truncate the future of our dear state? I pray things like these don't happen again."

However, a final year student from the Federal University, Lokoja (FUKOLOJA), Idris Olorunleke, praised the security measures in his institution.

"Here (FULOK) is very peaceful and conducive for learning. We have no record of murder cases except the inter (political) party clashes that occur once in a while outside the school premises."

A 300-Level student of the Department of Political Sciences (FULOK), agreed with Olorunleke.

“I don’t think there is any security challenge here at the moment except early this year when a student was stabbed inside the school, but the matter has since been put to bed.”

An undergraduate of the College of Education, Okene, Aimola Israel, from the Department of Social Studies, drew the public’s attention to certain atrocities perpetrated by some unscrupulous elements on campus.

He said: “The only security challenge we are currently facing is the bullying of students by some group of students popularly known as ‘Peace Committee’. On several occasions, the students are flogged and maltreated for no offence by this set of people.”

He added: “We have reported them to the school management several times but nothing has been done as the management insists on concrete evidence to support our claims.”

A source from Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja, who did not want to be named said: “One of our colleagues was attacked last week by some unknown men who injured him and collected his phone. We need more security measures so as to reduce the high rate of crimes on campus. The security operatives should be more strategic and dynamic in their approach towards ensuring maximum security.”

Mrs Stella Onogu, a trader within KSU premises said owing to the cult clashes, she now closes early and get home on time as most of the attacks were done outside school premises.

Nonetheless, another trader within KSU premises who introduced himself as Mr Victor did not have a good story.

“To some extent, the recent killings among other security challenges have really affected my business. For instance, before the recent clashes, I usually made more sales at nights compared to day time where we have many competitors around.”

A resident at Abuja area of Anyigba, who identified herself as Mummy Favour, lamented thus: “The killings are just too unbearable for us.”

She added, “In recent times, most of us have been treading with caution due to the insecurity as at then. But we are a bit relieved now.

“The students are now under a safe condition compared to previous weeks where the killings were on the high rate. We now have security personnel parading at night to keep watch over students.

“I would like the government to still improve on its security measures towards safety of the community members at large. We can’t rely on our local vigilante men alone for maximum security when we have other armed forces on ground.”

Interestingly, the association of motorcycle riders in KSU have also become victims of the insecurity.

One of the motorcycle riders, who pleaded not to be named said: “Before now, they (students) always patronised us mostly at night especially on weekends when some of them usually go to a popular hotel not too far away, for partying. Now, it is the opposite as the students rarely go out of their lodges at night.

“The government should put more adequate measures in place. We are no longer safe at night and this is affecting our business seriously.”

Another motorcycle rider, who identified himself as Idrisu also lent his voice.

“Our major sales point which is the back of the school, is now a no-go area at night because of the killings going on around the school.

“It is dangerous taking passenger to the back of school at nightfall, particularly NTA area because of the activities of these killers. There are so many of them in that area and I wouldn’t risk my life for money,” he said.

Mrs Usman, another trader whose shop is located at the school gate corroborated Usman.

“I close very early these days because of the low patronage from students. They (students) are my major customers and since they are no longer allowed to loiter around at night because of the killings, my business has been seriously affected. I now close by 9pm because of the fear of the unknown,” she said.

A resident of Anyigba, Mr Obaje (not real name), told CAMPUSLIFE that following the incident, residents now live in fear as no one knows who would be next on death toll.

Obaje said aside repeated clashes from rival groups, some of the hoodlums do engage in other atrocities like rape, stealing, and drug trafficking among others.

A student of KSU who pleaded anonymity fears that more teenagers and youths are being initiated into dangerous associations. He urged the government to organise sensitisation programmes for youths and students in higher institutions in the area on the dangers of cultism and the need for initiates to renounce their membership.

**SU seeks fighter security**

The Public Relations Officer (PRO) of KSU Students' Union Thomas Emmanuel, informed CAMPUSLIFE on steps by the union towards addressing the issue.

He said: "They (cult clashes) all started last year when a student in Natural Sciences was stabbed by some cultists along Century Lodge. This year however, the crisis deepened.

Emmanuel continued: "Last year, our SU base was raided alongside the *Man O'war* base with valuables stolen by some cult members. We reported the incident to the security unit, but to our surprise, we were told that the unit lacks sophisticated resources and manpower to tackle the security challenge at the time. We had no other choice than to rely on God for the security of our dear lives and properties.

"From January till date, the school has experienced a plethora of cult attacks that amounted to deaths of no fewer than 10 students.

"Subsequently, I wrote letters to various stakeholders in the state, but there was no response until recently when the Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello, intervened in the matter. I will still appeal to the government to salvage the students from the hands of these murderers."

### **We lack equipment, manpower**

Corroborating Emmanuel, KSU Commander of Man O'War group Samuel Adeyemi said issues bordering on security have been a herculean task.

"The security challenge on campus has been a huge burden on our shoulder for the past one month," Adeyemi began.

"We have been tirelessly working to get that reduced to the minimal level. As part of our security measures, we have started embarking on night patrols since the time we got information about cases of theft in the school hostels. Though the low work force from the school security has been a major challenge to us but, we have been working efficiently through the benevolence of the school management.

"During the patrol, we discovered that most of our students were not adhering to the usage of ID card within and outside the campus, which is very useful for our security duties. We use this medium to implore all students of KSU and Anyigba citizens to be security conscious and to desist from cult or cult-related activities," he warned.

### **Kogi youths want cultists to steer clear**

Kogi State Chairman of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) Comrade Oladele Nihi equally condemned the trend, and charged those involved to make a u-turn in the interest of their future.

Nihi vowed that NYCN would intensify sensitisation campaigns among students in the community against cultism and other social vices.

He called on security agencies to apprehend those involved in such clashes to serve as deterrent.

### **Kogi govt goes tough on KSU**

Bello has sacked the Chief Security Officer (CSO) of KSU Major M. M. Adama (rtd). CAMPUSLIFE learnt that the governor was irked by the inability of the security arm of KSU to stem the tide of violent cult clashes

Adama has been replaced by the former Commander of SARS (State Anti-Robbery Squad) in the state, Mr Aurelius Yusuf Adejo, who has vowed to come up with a more innovative approach to address insecurity in the institution.

“Recently, we had a meeting with Mr Adejo, on the way forward as regards security crises bedevilling the school,” said the spokesman for the newly appointed CSO, Mr. Benjamin Akor.

“At the meeting, we were briefed on some security measures that the new administration would put in place to curb the incessant attacks by these cult groups. As part of what was highlighted, the CSO recommended the mounting of CCTVs at some strategic places within the campus to checkmate the rate of crimes in school.

“Mr Adejo also advised the management to block all illegal routes that link the campus and thereafter fence the school.

“Aside the killings that occurred outside the school by some political thugs and cult members in previous months, KSU campus has been very peaceful, and we would ensure that the lives and properties of our students are well secured.”

### **We have made some arrest, says police**

Meanwhile, the Kogi State Police Command said it had arrested some of the suspects involved in the cult clashes at Anyigba.

The spokesman of the Kogi State Police Command William Aya, said all the suspects arrested are students of KSU.

Aya noted that a joint operation by the army and police in Anyigba led to the arrest of six suspected cult members.

He said exhibits recovered from the suspects include one English pistol, one locally made pistol, one short gun, 10 cartridges, one axe and charms.

Aya warned those engaging in cultism and other crimes to repent, or face the full wrath of the law.

- *Additional reports by **Adegunle Olugbamila***



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