

Gunmen abduct nine passengers, kill two, rob others

GUNMEN operating at the Imo axis of the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway have kidnapped nine Enugu-bound passengers, killed two and robbed others.

The victims, who hail from Amangwo Olokoru in Umuahia, were said to be travelling to Enugu on Saturday for a burial when they were attacked.

Narrating their ordeal to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Umuahia on Sunday, one of them, who identified himself simply as Francis, said their Sienna Bus was flagged down at gunpoint near the Arondizuogu Junction.

Francis said the vehicle was later diverted off the express-

way to Arondizuogu Road in Imo, from where they were led into a hamlet far into the bush.

He said: "We were travelling to Enugu for burial and when we got close to Arondizuogu Junction, we saw a group of heavily armed men and they asked us to park."

"One of us in the vehicle asked them 'why do you ask us to park and pointing your guns at us, do you know who I am?' "Then one of the hoodlums said: 'Now oga, you will prove to us who you are.'

"They ordered us out of the vehicle and asked us to sit on the ground and pull off our shirts with which they blindfolded us.

"From there, they started beating the man that made

the comment with a machete."

He said when they got into the hamlet, residents watched them as if it was a movie.

"When we alighted, their leader asked about the man that made the comment and they pointed at him.

"They brought him out, and barely three steps away from us, they shot him dead.

"Another man with us, who saw what happened and attempted to escape was also shot dead," Francis said.

According to him, they seized the two bodies.

He said the hoodlums were not fewer than 50 in their hideout, with 20 of them heavily armed.

"These men were speaking

our own language. They told us that Umuahia people are 'sabo to them', that they asked us not to vote in the last election and we went out to vote; that they declared Mondays sit-at-home and we are not obeying them; that any Umuahia person they got around here will get it hot.

"Then they asked us to say our last prayers," Francis said.

He said as they were praying, they were moved into one of the three new Hummer buses in the hideout and were taken to where they boarded their Sienna bus.

"At that point, they asked whether we can find our way out and we said no and they told the driver to go straight.

"They said we should go

and tell Umuahia people what we saw. That was how we found ourselves back to Umuahia," he said.

Francis said valuables were collected from them, including cash and cell phones.

The deceased persons were identified as Chukwuemeka Nwachukwu, a pastor, who commented at the abduction point, and the Village Youth Leader, Ifeanyi Onwunkwe, who attempted to escape.

Imo Police Public Relations Officer, Henry Okoye, could not be reached.



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OMBUDSMAN

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