

Sit-at-home: Two suspected robbers, four vehicles burnt in Anambra, Abia

TWO suspected armed robbers and four vehicles were burnt in Anambra and Abia states yesterday as residents continued to observe sit-at-home.

Residents of major cities in Enugu and Imo states also stayed home in spite of assurances of their safety by their state governments.

The Nation gathered that the robbery suspects were attempting to rob tricycle passengers at the Obósi Roundabout along the Owerri-Onitsha Road, in Idemili North Local Government Area, when they met their Waterloo.

An eyewitness said: "The robbers tried to escape, but were caught by the mob who immediately set them ablaze with disused tyres and fuel.

"They (suspects) normally operate with the tricycle they rob from people, but today, they boarded as passengers.

"But midway to their destination, the two started robbing the passengers who immediately started shouting despite warning that they should be gunned down if they shout."

At Nnewi, where the Senator Representing Anambra South, Ifeanyi Ubah, had warned sit-at-home enforcers to stay away, residents opted not to take any chance by staying indoors.

Ubah himself was not sighted anywhere in the city yesterday. When *The Nation*, tried to reach him, his line rang out.

The senator had last week warned Simon Ekpa, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) operating from Finland, to steer clear of Nnewi.

"From this Monday (yesterday), every business area in Nnewi shall be open for business. We have our men, we have our system. I know saboteurs will try to

From Nwanosike Onu, Awka, Sunny Nwankwo, Umuahia; Damian Duruibeoma, Enugu; Chris Njoku, Owerri and Ogochukwu Anioke, Abakaliki

sabotage our efforts, but we're resolved to fight any aggressor that will come into this town" he said

Ubah lamented that for the past years that Ekpa had been enforcing sit-at-home on the Igbo despite the huge misfortune and hardship associated with it.

The Nation observed in the industrial city that even children who usually played football on the streets during sit-at-home kept off. Also, the few shops that used to be bold enough to open on Mondays did not do so for fear of attacks.

It was gathered from the residents that they preferred to stay indoors because of the low presence of security agents.

The situation was same in the commercial city of Onitsha.

But Awka, the state capital was busy with shops and commercial tricycle drivers operating full swing.

In Aba North and South Local Government Areas, suspected members of the Ekpa group of IPOB unleashed mayhem on the residents in the early hours of yesterday.

Although there was no reported case of death, the attackers who wore black attire, burnt four vehicles and a tricycle in various parts of the councils.

A resident, who gave his name as Gilbert, said a commercial vehicle bus was burnt at a popular junction linking Port Harcourt Road and Ngwa Road at about 5:30 am.

Another resident said that a heavy-duty truck, two commercial buses conveying bread and foodstuffs and a tricycle were burnt at the Uratta area of the city.

It was gathered that the group members were heading towards Ariaria junction by the expressway when they sighted soldiers attached to the 144 Battalion and retreated.

The Nation gathered that the early morning incidents made most residents not to venture out.

A senior security operative, who declined to be named, said quick intervention by policemen made the attackers flee from the streets.

As of 5 pm yesterday, a joint patrol of security agencies was on a show of force in the city.

In Enugu State, where residents continued to observe the sit-at-home, the government warned that it would begin to sanction its political office holders and civil servants who fail to turn up in their offices on Mondays.

Roads, banks, schools and offices were under lock and key in spite of the order by Governor Peter Mbah banning the sit-at-home in the state.

The governor had since the announcement met with stakeholders, including road transport workers and labour unions for their support.

It was gathered that when civil servants heard of the decision by the government to open an attendance register in their respective ministries, some of them showed up at their duty posts.

It was gathered that those who arrived late were directed to report at the office of the Head of Service where sheets of papers were provided for them to enter their names.

Businesses and other activities in parts of Imo State were also paralysed due to fear of attacks by the members of Auto Pilot.

Some workers who braved the situation met their offices closed and re-



•Soludo

turned.

One of them, who gave his name simply as Moses said: "When I got to the office around 8 am, I did not see my colleagues around.

I decided to return home."

Another, Chiaka Nwosu, said "I decided not to come out because I don't want to be killed by those hoodlums. So, when I heard that there will be no movement, I decided to stay indoors."

In Ebonyi State, residents went about their normal activities as they do every other Monday.

Private and public offices opened for their normal business while students reported in their schools unmolested.

Meanwhile, the Mazi Nnamdi Kanu-led IPOB has disassociated itself from any purported call for a one-week sit-at-home in Southeast.

The group blamed "paid agents whose agenda is to ridicule" its struggle for the "irresponsible order."

"The purported one-week sit-at-home jingle on social media is not from IPOB. We are not in the business of issuing irresponsible and non-existent sit-at-home orders. IPOB is a responsible movement and family," IPOB said in a statement by its spokesman Emma Powerful yesterday.