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The residents of Odo Ona, Gbekuba and Apata areas in Ibadan, Oyo State, had recently been under the siege of burglars and armed robbers, Metro has learnt.

According to information gathered by Metro, no fewer than five churches, as well as several shops were invaded by armed robbers in the last three weeks, resulting in the killing of two night guards.

One of the robbers' operations was reportedly carried out on March 4, at the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Jesus Court, located at Peku junction, Gbekuba area.

It was robbed of its newly acquired multi-million naira equipment. According to a member of the church, who spoke with Metro under anonymity, two keyboards worth almost N2 million (a motif X8 and Yamaha keyboard), a digital mixer, plasma TV, among other audio equipment, were stolen. Not only that.

He said the robbers also entered the pastor's office and drank juice; defecated in the pastor's toilet and left their solid waste in the water closet.

It was further learnt that an Anglican church at the same Gbekuba area was robbed of its musical and audio equipment.

An elderly resident of the area disclosed that the following weekend, two churches: Kingdom Life and the Christ Life ministries, also around Apata, were reportedly robbed.

He added that many houses around the railway junction were burgled and in one home, a man was inflicted with machete cuts deep. The victim reportedly died at the hospital after days of treatment.

A night guard around Wema Junction, Apata, was also reported killed a few weeks ago, after he

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accosted some robbers who had broken into a shop which contained bags of rice.

On March 22, residents of Aba Alfa and Onirinloye in Gbekuba, Apata, around 6:00 a.m, woke to the sounds of gunshots in the area.

By the time the dust cleared, a night guard, Sule Oyashola (a.k.a Akotami) (36) was found in his pool of blood, with a gunshot wound on his chest.

He later died while being rushed to the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan.

Witnesses at the scene claimed that some robbers broke into a shop stocked with cartons of noodles.

After loading the cartons into their getaway vehicle, the deceased reportedly accosted the robbers, which made them shoot him.

Another witness, who spoke on condition of anonymity decried Sule's murder, stressing that the menace of robbers in the area was becoming unbearable. "We sleep with one eye open now. I believe the drink joints which are springing up everywhere in this area is majorly responsible for the influx of robbers.

They (robbers) drink local gin till midnight at such joints, after most road gates would have been closed and so are free to move within the area and wreak havoc. We are hoping the police and relevant authorities can come to our aid."

As if the crimes perpetrated by the robbers were not enough, they supposedly took it a notch higher last Sunday when an aged couple was reportedly kidnapped around the Apata/NNPC axis.

According to a witness who sells food around the area, the couple was waylaid on their way to church and transferred to another vehicle, after which the kidnappers sped off.



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"It was like a movie. I heard screeching of tyres. By the time I got near the scene to see if it was accident, I was told that an aged couple had been kidnapped and their car abandoned. The kidnappers had forced the couple's car to a halt and forcefully took them from their vehicle. We did not know who the occupants of the vehicle were, but we believe they were on their way to church," the witness said.

When contacted on the security situation in Apata and its environs, the Police Public Relations Officer of Oyo State Police Command, Adekunle Ajisebutu, a Superintendent of Police told Metro that the Commissioner of Police, Abiodun Odude, had directed the Divisional Police Officer to provide adequate security in the affected area and ensure police visibility.

The PPRO added that other anti-crime units of the command such as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and Swift Response Squad (SRS) had been directed to ensure constant patrol of the area to complement the DPO's efforts.

He disclosed that there had been some arrests, stressing that investigation would reveal if the suspects were among those who carried out robbery operations in the area.

He also confirmed the report of the kidnap case, assuring: "We are closing in on the kidnappers and making frantic efforts to rescue the victims. We assure the family that we will rescue them." He also said that the police commissioner had ordered that security should be beefed up in all parts of the state.

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