

# PORT HARCOURT/Killing Mourners Mindlessly

**T**he mourners never knew that death lurked in the horizon. Indeed, it was a most inauspicious time to come to one's end. Yes, at about noon, Friday 2 March, mourners in a long convoy of cars coming from the Kpaima mortuary at Elechi beach, Mile One, Diobu, Port Harcourt, were attacked by gunmen at Emenike junction, Ikwerre Road in the Rivers State capital.

cult on a vengeful mission against the family of the deceased being conveyed for burial, who was suspected to be a member of a rival gang.

After firing at the funeral convoy, the gunmen moved towards Ikokwu Motor Spare Parts Market area along Ikwerre Road and continued shooting indiscriminately. The source said more than 20 people wounded were rushed to nearby hospitals and clinics.

He added that a clinic in Mile One area refused to admit some of the injured persons for fear of being attacked by cult members.

A resident of Mile II told *TheNEWS* that he had to abandon his house and take refuge with some family friends at Rumuola. "I have never seen that kind of madness all my life. All commercial vehicles, motorbike operators and private car owners avoided Mile I and Mile

II Diobu area," he said.

While a local radio station reported that seven persons were killed, the Public Relations Officer of the Rivers State Police Command, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, told newsmen that from reports available, three

persons lost their lives in the attack. She also refuted a report that a policeman was killed by the gunmen.

The leader of the Hausa community in Port Harcourt, Alhaji Imam, expressed deep sorrow that the peace that had pervaded Port Harcourt in recent times was fast disappearing. He condemned the unprovoked attack on innocent persons, especially the Hausa petty traders and unarmed passers-by.

Alhaji Imam said the Hausa community has been thrown into mourning and appealed to the Rivers State government to get to the root of the matter to prevent a recurrence. He said that since the inception of the present administration in the state, members of the Hausa community had been fully integrated into the mainstream of governance and enjoyed cordial relations with other ethnic groups in the state.

On Tuesday 6 March, information filtered in that Mr. Felix Ogbaudu, the state Commissioner of Police, was going to



• One of the victims of the cult clash.

An eyewitness said the gunmen arrived the scene in two buses painted in Rivers State official colours and started spraying the mourners with bullets. Not less than seven persons were said to have been killed, including some passers-by and nearby Hausa petty traders. The gunmen were suspected to be members of a